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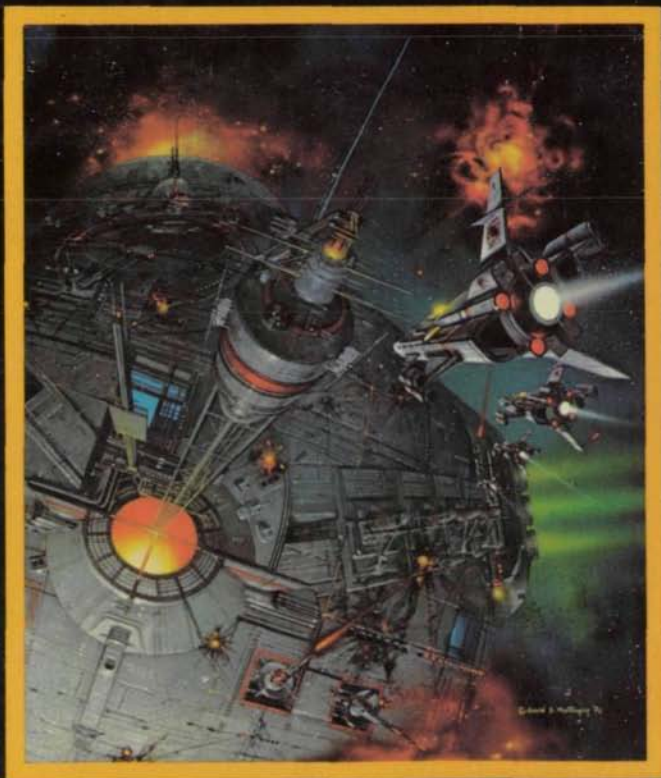
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AMAZING

SCIENCE FICTION STORIES

"The Cold Green Eye,"
by Jack Williamson • **"The Con-**
tainment of Calpel V," by Barry N. Malzberg
"Grumblefritz" by Marvin Kaye • **plus stories**
by David R. Bunch, Wayne Wightman,
Kendall Evans, Timothy Zahn and more



Articles: UFOs: they aren't
what they used to be, Steven
Dimeo • The Flim-Flam World
of SF Film, Parke Godwin &
Howard Roller • and more



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In this issue

IDEAS. IDEAS THAT NO OTHER FICTION EXAMINES. Ideas in unusual settings. This seems to be what fantasy (including sf) is all about. And we are loaded with them in this issue. More than any other reason, the idea behind a story is what attracts us to it.

This is why you'll read on these pages a range of ideas from man's struggle with a black hole in Timothy Zahn's "Energy Crisis of 2215" to a whimsical plea for hope in Marvin Kaye's *Big Apple Sea Serpent*, "Grumblefritz". Or a search for courage to confront an alien race in John Steakley's "The Bluenose Limit"; how the power of love transcends dimensions in Cynthia Wagner-Emmons' "The Barrier"; a satirical view of life on a spaceship colony in Wayne Wightman's "The Semi-Happy Life of Gorman Rimly"; a study of capricious alien manipulation in Barry Malzberg's "Containment of Calpel V"; or of twisted visions and perceptions in David Bunch's "In The Ball of Frosted Glass"; and more.

Good fantasy is probably the most enlightened, unfettered, expressive and prophetic form of literature going for us. Way ahead of its time — always. And there's something in it for everyone.

Also for your reading pleasure are a variety of articles and features concerning UFOs, communication satellites, an interview with Manly Wade Wellman and a biting piece about the current state of sf filmdom. Plus departments: book reviews, fan news and Intercom — back by popular demand. The letter column will appear as often as we receive letters with Ideas — about the Ideas in our magazine.

We hope you enjoy all of it — including the masterful cover painted especially for *Amazing* by David Mattingly and *another brilliant* back cover illustration by our gifted friend Gary Freeman: also interior illos by the talented Steve Fabian, Gene and Dan Day, and Gary Freeman.

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AMAZING

SCIENCE FICTION STORIES

FOUNDED BY HUGO GERNSBACH



March, 1981

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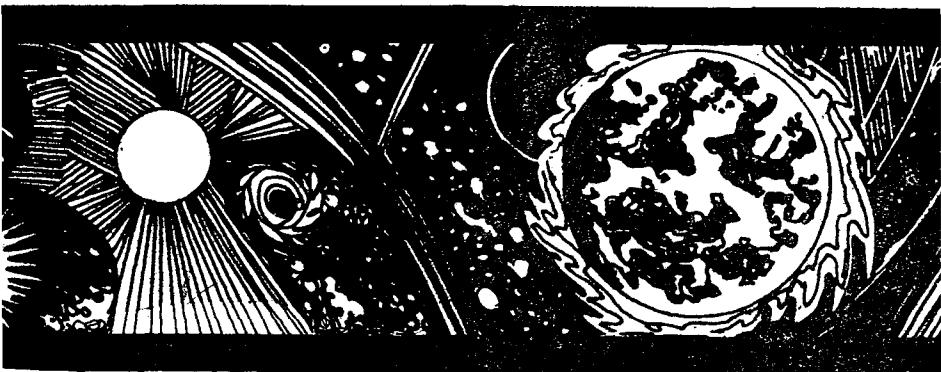
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UFOs JUST AREN'T what they used to be.

That isn't to say they've changed over the years — although they have. From Alexander Hamilton's 1897 sighting of a dirigible-like object on his farm in Le Roy, Kansas, and the "foo fighters" that dogged pilots during World War II, they have "matured" into what research psychologist Dr. R.N. Shepard identified in a paper presented to the House Committee on Science and Astronautics in July of 1968 as at least 63 different types of flying saucers.

Nor does it mean that UFOs aren't in the news like they have been — although in fact they aren't. Despite fears expressed by officials of the Aerial Phenomena Research Organization (APRO) in *The APRO Bulletin* that Steven Spielberg's late-1977 release of "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" might precipitate another another shower of sightings, nothing happened — either in the movie or in the skies. Since pilot Kenneth Arnold inadvertently popularized the term "flying saucers" with his June, 1947, observation over Mt. Rainer and triggered the first UFO "flap," the number of sightings have peaked in 1950, 1954, 1957, 1962, and 1973 — clearly dropping off in the last decade.

UFOs aren't what they used to be, rather, because the explanations for what they might be are no longer as simple as they were. They may, it seems, be all in our minds. And not in the sense that they are purely hallucinative products of

STEVEN DIMEO

UFOs:

THEY AREN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE

mass hysteria or psychotic witnesses either. In the very cases that cannot be explained away under scrutiny as hoaxes or misinterpreted natural phenomena (everything from fireballs and swamp gas to, surprisingly, the most popular, *Venus!*), "ufologists" are beginning to consider theories classifying these preternatural events as more psychic than psychological.

Explanations in the past, of course, have generally relegated the UFO phenomenon more to the realm of science-fiction than to the occult. The most widely held theory has been the Extraterrestrial Hypothesis (ETH): UFOs may be alien spacecraft — either watchful probes since many objects are too small even to accommodate the oft-sighted three-foot-high humanoids (seldom reported as "green" despite the stereotype), or interplanetary vehicles whose sizes indicate they can accommodate not only a number of humanoids but sometimes, at least in the case of the cigar-shaped "mother ships," even a fleet of lenticular craft. Dr. James E. McDonald, professor of meteorology at the University of Arizona, merely echoed popular sentiment, then, when he told a 1966 meeting of the American Meteorological Society, as quoted in Frank Edwards' *Flying Saucers — Here and Now* (N.Y.: Bantam Books, 1967), that for all the difficulties involved, "The extra-terrestrial theory is the least unsatisfactory hypothesis to explain the phenomenon of the UFOs." But the ETH hardly accounts for the mind-boggling variety of UFO experiences. John A. Keel in the July-August, 1969, issue of *Flying Saucer Review* has tried to enumerate some of the countless inconsistencies:

One of the many troublesome negative factors is the fact that although thousands of UFO photos have been taken in the past twenty years, only a dozen or so taken in different parts of the world depict identical objects. If the objects were more uniform in design (and origin) there would now be hundreds of identical pictures. Thus, on the strength of the pictorial evidence alone we can conclude that a wide, almost endless, variety of objects is involved . . .

The U.S. Air Force (made) . . . an effort to study all of the sighting reports in the early 1950s. Project Blue Book Report No. 14 contained 240 charts, graphs, and tables breaking down the known and unknown reports into many categories. If you study the report carefully you will see some of the reasons for the official conclusions. The sightings were too numerous and too frequent to be the work of a single technological source. The descriptions, including those of the coveted 'reliable witnesses,' were too varied to support the notion that they were simply and purely manufactured machines. An attempt to develop a 'model UFO' from the descriptions in 434 'unknown' cases met with failure. There was no single basic uniformity in all these reports. Therefore, either every object was individually constructed and utilized only once, or . . . none of the objects really existed at all.

Mathematician Jaques Vallee (the model for the French investigator Lacombe in "Close Encounters") and his wife Janine in *Challenge to Science: The UFO Enigma* (N.Y.: Balantine Books, 1966) add one more important point: if UFOs are interplanetary vehicles, why haven't the extraterrestrials advanced technologically over the centuries? Descriptions of UFOs from the past have filtered down to us strained through the vocabulary and perceptual

restrictions peculiar to each era. But from Ezekiel's "wheel" to the two-hour-long bright light sighted by astronomer Halley on March 6, 1716, or the mysterious "bolides" and "ball lightning" recorded in the 1880s in the French Astronomical Society's *L'Astronomie* and perhaps even the "luminous globe" witnessed at the so-called Miracle of Fatima on July 13, 1917, the common denominator is that they usually appeared spherical as they do today. Neither have UFOs followed any kind of systematic progression in size. Objects have ranged from three to as much as 200 feet in diameter, often during the same "flap." Even if we assume the smaller craft to be remote probes, that cannot alone explain such a chaotic variety of sizes. And if the cigar-shaped "mother ships" are really protective way stations for the saucers, the Valleys ask, then why haven't those ships been seen as frequently by ground observers or scientists tracking stars and satellites?

Senior avionics editor for *Aviation Week and Space Technology* and Assoc. Prof. of English at Pennsylvania State University Philip J. Klass (known to SF readers of the Fifties as William Tenn) prefers a more down-to-earth explanation in *UFOs Identified* (N.Y.: Random House, 1968). Many UFOs, he claims, may only be an unknown type of plasma, or ionized, high-temperature gas. He, in other words, takes one step further famous skeptic Dr. Donald H. Menzel's stance in such books as *The World of Flying Saucers* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1963) that all UFOs are nothing more than atmospheric anomalies — except that Klass grants the phenomena may be somewhat beyond the natural. Since UFOs are often sighted around high tension wires or power stations and water, he maintains, they might be a corona phenomenon that could under unusual circumstances separate from the lines and move as free bodies. Known plasma phenomena, however, never last more than a few seconds and require a huge energy input. Interestingly, Klass minimizes even this bizarre interpretation in his trenchant examination of famous cases in *UFOs Explained* (N.Y. Vintage Books, 1974), an unacknowledged classic in the field which exposes every instance as either a hoax or confused perceptions of often multiple natural phenomena.

The so-called Wassilko-Serecki theory endorsed by naturalist and occult writer Dr. Ivan T. Sanderson in his book *Uninvited Visitors: A Biologist Looks at UFOs* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1967) proposes that UFOs may be an even more supernormal natural phenomenon — life forms indigenous to space that feed-off energy. Since Sanderson's death in 1973, aviation historian Trevor James Constable has become the standard bearer, amending the approach to consider UFOs instead as plasma-bodied "critters" thriving in our own atmosphere. This biological concept, for all its wild imaginativeness, might explain away some of the sightings — but hardly ones involving beings seen inside and outside the objects.

A less naturalistic theory comes straight out of H.G. Wells: UFOs may be time-traveling devices. The Valleys pose that possibility out of a disenchantment with the ETH. As implausible as it sounds, it could account for those experiences with UFOs in which time for the observer is distorted in some way. Keel has drawn the following conclusions about such cases in his aforementioned article:

The two most commonly reported time distortion effects (TDE) are:

1. Time compression — The witness undergoes an experience of seemingly long duration but later discovers a comparatively short period of real time — or Earth time — has passed. Experiments have

shown that seemingly long and involved dreams often occupy only a few seconds or a few minutes of the sleeper's real time. Therefore we must examine time-compression experiences from a psychiatric approach as well as a physical approach.

2. Time lapses. Events in which the witness suffers partial or total amnesia and is unable to remember how he passed specific periods of time. Several cases have been reported to me in which the witnesses, who were usually in automobiles, saw an approaching object and then suffered a memory lapse although they had no awareness of losing consciousness or otherwise undergoing an unusual experience. Such witnesses complain that it took them two hours or more to drive distances of only a few miles. This type of experience also demands psychiatric examination.

A psychological explanation is certainly the most reasonable, but these temporal discrepancies could signify that some technologically implausible activity such as time travel might be involved, perhaps even the side-effect of presently incomprehensible propulsion system. Yet Einstein's time dilation theory — that time for someone approaching the speed of light would be progressively slower than "real" Earth time — concerns only the occupants, not the Earth observers or "contactees" who claim to have entered stationary vehicles where time is unnaturally telescoped or protracted.

There is an even more fanciful explanation for the time distortion element in UFO reports: the witness may broach not a time-traveling craft or some mysterious part of his unconscious, but rather a real space-age fairy world. So says Jacques Vallee in *Passport to Magonia: From Folklore to Flying Saucers* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1969). Having attempted a more scientific analysis of the mystery in his two earlier studies, *Challenge to Science* and *Anatomy of a Phenomenon: UFOs in Space — A Scientific Appraisal* (N.Y.: Ballantine Books, 1965), he seems here finally to have thrown his hands up in despair. "Attempting to understand the meaning, the purpose of the so-called flying saucers, as many people are doing today," he writes towards the end of *Passport to Magonia*,

is just as futile as was the pursuit of the fairies, if one makes the mistake of confusing appearance and reality. The phenomenon has stable, invariant features, some of which we have tried to identify and label clearly. But we have also had to note carefully the chameleon-like character of the secondary attributes of the sightings, the shapes of the objects, the appearances of their occupants, their reporter statements, vary as a function of the cultural environment into which they are projected.

More of that in a moment. Vallee thereupon cites five indisputable characteristics about the UFO phenomenon as a whole which must be reconciled in any valid theory of the origin of these strange objects:

Fact 1. There has been among the public, in all countries since the middle of 1946, an extremely active generation of colorful rumors. They center on a considerable number of observations of unknown machines close to the ground in rural areas, the physical traces left by these machines, and their various effects on humans and animals.

Fact 2. When the underlying archetypes are extracted from these rumors, the saucer myth is seen to coincide to a remarkable degree with the fairy-faith of Celtic countries, the observations of the scholars of past ages, and the widespread belief among all peoples concerning entities whose physical and psychological descriptions place them in the same category as the present-day ufonauts.

Fact 3. The entities human witnesses report to have seen, heard, and touched fall into various biological types. Among them are beings of giant stature, men indistinguishable from us, winged creatures, and various types of monsters. Most of the so-called pilots, however, are dwarfs and form two main groups: (1) dark, hairy beings — identical to the gnomes of medieval theory — with small, bright eyes and deep, rugged, 'old' voices; and (2) beings — who answer the description of the sylphs of the Middle Ages or the elves of the fairyfaith — with human complexions, oversized heads, and silvery voices...

Fact 4. The entities' reported behavior is as consistently absurd as the appearance of their craft is ludicrous...

Fact 5. The mechanism of the apparitions, in legendary, historical, and modern times, is standard and follows the model of religious miracles. Several cases, which bear the official stamp of the Catholic Church..., are in fact — if one applies the definitions strictly — nothing more than UFO phenomena where the entity has delivered a message having to do with religious beliefs rather than with fertilizers or engineering.

Vallee's subsequent conclusions are wordy but eventually rewarding:

Proposition 1. The behavior of nonhuman visitors to our planet, or the behavior of a superior race coexisting with us on this planet, would not necessarily appear purposeful to a human observer. Scientists who brush aside UFO reports because 'obviously intelligent visitors would not behave like that' simply have not given serious thought to the problem of nonhuman intelligence...

Proposition 2. If we recognize that the structure and nature of time is as much of a puzzle to modern physicists as it was to Reverend Kirk [who wrote *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies* (1691)], then it follows that any theory of the universe that does not take our ignorance in this respect into account is bound to remain an academic exercise. In particular, such a theory could never be invoked seriously in a discussion of the constraints placed on possible visitors to our planet.

Proposition 3. The entire mystery we are discussing contains all the elements of a myth that could be utilized to serve political or sociological purposes, a fact illustrated by the curious link between the contents of the reports themselves and the progress of human technology, from aerial ships to dirigibles to ghost rockets to flying saucers — a link that has never received a satisfactory interpretation in a sociological framework.

He means only to suggest in Propositions 1 and 2 that we cannot presume to comprehend the behavioral and temporal plane of god-like creatures — unless as he implies in Proposition 3, we see them as other god-like creatures from our

own richly imaginative cultural heritage.

Vallee thus approaches the dilemma not as a physical scientist but as a folklorist. Though he deftly sidesteps the many differences, he calls our attention to thought-provoking similarities between past folk tales and contemporary UFO experiences. Among the more noteworthy motifs are the supernatural abductions or thefts, "fairy rings" and saucer landing impressions, and the "Rip Van Winkle" time distortions mentioned earlier. UFOs, he believes, may therefore evidence any of three possibilities:

(1) A kind of parallel universe where religious and legendary creatures, giants, dwarfs and fairies really do exist, sometimes breaking through to our universe for purposes of bizarre cross-breeding.

(2) The beginning of a new 20th century myth meant to satisfy inherent human need satisfied in our less technologically oriented forefathers by standard folktales.

(3) What he implies are "engineered lies" brought on by some dimly understood mental power in our race or various cultures "to make large sections of any population believe in the existence of supernatural races, in the possibility of flying machines, or in the plurality of inhabited worlds" — though naturally Vallee here is at a loss to suggest why or even how.

Psychoanalyst Carl G. Jung, of course, considered something quite similar to Vallee's third hypothesis, the key thought that bridges the gap between UFOs as science-fiction and as occult materializations. Trying to deal with UFOs as possibly real rather than dream-like realizations in *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Sky* (N.Y.: New American Library, 1959), Jung writes, "It boils down to nothing less than this: that either psychic projections throw back a radar echo, or else the appearance of real objects affords an opportunity for mythological projections." In *The Occult: A History* (N.Y.: Random House, 1971) Colin Wilson considers the same possibility when he points to the example of the fictional character of Morbius from W. J. Stuart's novel *Forbidden Planet* elevated to a classic SF film in 1955. While studying the remains of an advanced civilization on the planet Altair 4, Morbius learns that the Krells developed the power to project their own mental images as reality and, in so learning, unwittingly develops the power himself to create and unleash a mongrel monster of the mind growing out of his frustrated desire to keep impervious the private world of his work and daughter. Such an ability might, Wilson speculates, be at the root of all occult phenomena from werewolves to flying saucers. "The subconscious mind," as he puts it,

is not simply a kind of deep-seat repository of sunken memories and atavistic desires, but of forces that can, under certain circumstances, manifest themselves in the physical world with a force that goes beyond anything the conscious mind could command.

Even reporter Ralph Blum ends his book-length examination *Beyond Earth: Man's Contact with UFOs* (N.Y.: Bantam Books, 1974) on a similar note:

But they [UFOs] might be part of a psychic Phenomenon which for centuries has been manifesting in forms acceptable to our stage of development — 'sky people,' fiery chariots, airships, rockets, and now spacecraft. Which would mean that UFOs are 'paraphysical,' composed of a type of intelligent energy that can take any form it desires. Far out as this notion seems, it would explain the countless

sightings where UFOs change shape and size, split and converge, or simply dematerialize. It is even possible that we are dealing with both extraterrestrial and parapsychical phenomena. I'm not even prepared to rule out the idea that some UFOs might be living holograms projected on the sky by the laser beams of man's unconscious mind!

The question remains, of course, *why*. Writers have proposed that the reason may be as much sociological as psychological: observers may be psychically realizing dreams and nightmares on the heavens not out of individual aspirations and frustrations, but out of unconscious cultural imprinting. Sanderson in *Invisible Residents* (N.Y.: Avon, 1970) implies that such projections may stem from a cultural base when he generalizes a bit too neatly about the nature of UFO occupants like this:

The Irish see little green men; the northern Italians, tall blue men; the Latin Americans are attacked by horrible little hairy dwarfs, apparently made of metal against which machetes and knives shatter; peaceable and loving but disturbed North Americans meet gorgeous blondes sitting on rocks in the woods who admonish them to ban the bomb; and so on and on.

That is, Jungian archetypes — ageless cultural motifs in the humanities may have physically realized counterparts in the everyday world. In *The Unidentified: Notes Toward Solving the UFO Mystery* (N.Y.: Warner Paperback Library, 1975) Jerome Clark and Loren Coleman offer us a likely example of that. UFO prophet Paul Solem was universally accepted as a True White Brother by the Hopi Indians in Prescott, Arizona — that is, until his prediction of an Easter Sunday, 1971, appearance of saucers from Venus failed to take place. Earlier successful demonstrations of his visionary contact with what the Hopis assumed were *kachinas* or spirit-like beings from other planets that taught their ancestors moral and agricultural advances, may have been attributable, say Clark and Coleman, to psychokinetic powers Solem and his followers unknowingly invoked. Whatever the cause of the UFOs, "The Prescott affair," the authors conclude,

shows how easily UFO manifestations can adopt themselves to prevailing cultural circumstances. Just as the Hopi religion itself had begun to blend with Christianity ('Maasau is really Jesus,' a Hopi woman told us), so when the new revelation came with the Venusian spaceships it absorbed the archetypes of the Hopi and the Christian and assumed a form that people of the Space Age could accept.

If UFOs really are such parapsychical projections, individually or culturally generated, the implications would in a way be even more far-reaching than finding out they were spacecraft piloted by extraterrestrials here to ensure or threaten our survival. Earlier theories holding that the truly inexplicable UFO cases substantiate the ETH, natural or biological phenomena beyond our ability to understand, time-traveling devices, or even a real-life fairy world co-existent with our own — these all presume one thing: our considerable human limitations. If UFOs prove to be unconscious psychic "apportations," as mediums might call them, if they are more the product of the pseudo-sciences than science-fiction, they confirm a latent power within us whose limits we may never know. And even if we discover that UFO experiences are fed by our

basest human fears and insecurities, the thought that they represent unprobed powers of the human mind for both creativity and destructiveness beyond our ken, is still somehow curiously consoling. ●

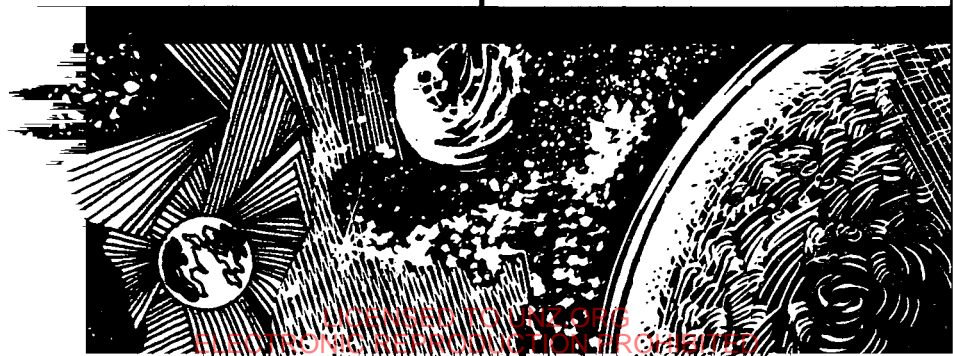
Steven Dimeo, Ph.D.

With a B.A. in English from the University of Oregon and an M.A. and Ph.D. in American literature from the University of Utah where he graduated in 1970, Steven Dimeo has taught writing and literature on the college level for two years, on the secondary for one. In 1974-75 he served as Fulbright lecturer at the Gesamthochschule Duisburg in West Germany where his most popular class proved to be one devoted to the writings of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. Formerly entertainment critic for the *Oregon Daily Emerald* (1964-66) and past editor of science and fiction-related projects, he began his own literary journal *Transition* in 1976 which resumed publication in 1981 as the *New Oregon Review*.

Born in Portland, Oregon, Sept. 27, 1945, Dimeo, who wrote his first short story at the age of 12 and started mailing out manuscripts by the time he was 17, had to wait until his 30th year before his fiction began appearing in "little" magazines like *Firelands Arts Review*, *Pyramid* and *Weirdbook*. Two tales from what he

calls his "other loves" — his dog and his car — have just recently been published in the national periodicals *Oui Magazine* (a Playboy Ent. publication) and the *Michigan Quarterly Review*. "Light of the Matter," his first short story to appear in a science-fiction magazine, was inspired in part by a 1968 Max Gunther article on lasers. Dimeo's film criticism and scholarship in the field of SF/fantasy film and literature have seen print in *Cinefantastique*, *Amazing*, *Fantastic*, *Riverside Quarterly*, *Film Heritage* and the *Journal of Popular Culture*.

Employed now in a county civil service job as a property appraiser in his hometown of Hillsboro, Oregon, where he lives with his wife of four years, he is at work on two novels, one based on his research into the UFO phenomenon, the other stemming from his interest in magic and folklore. He lists among his hobbies jogging, gardening, photography and neurasthenia.



intercom

*Intercom will appear when and if we receive enough letters per issue that say something interesting — or provoke us to say something of interest to readers. We love the ratings game, but really would rather hear what you **THINK** about the ideas expressed in articles and fiction on our pages.—EM*

Dear Mr. Dimeo,

When I read your "Film Focus" article on "The Empire Strikes Back," I noticed that you found the character C3PO irritating. When I saw the movie, I began to suspect that it was a problem for the writers, and with the article I realized that it could also be one for the viewers if they fail to recognize a classic SF theme, that of artificial intelligence which becomes very intelligent but remains very artificial. C3PO is not a stupid human, but a complicated piece of equipment despite his ability to learn and develop. It is easy to imagine his early programming: "Obey people. Help people. Protect people. Be polite. Be friendly. Be agreeable. Volunteer your help. Avoid arguments." Unlike a person, he hasn't been able to figure out for himself that you can't please and appease and help all the people all the time, at least not in the middle of a war. As a result, he comes through as a fool and a nuisance, because the film brings up the problem and leaves it dangling.

You also remarked on his lack of loyalty. Didn't you notice that for most of the movie he was totally separated from his owner for the first time since he told R2D2, from whom he is also separated, "We belong to Master Luke now." (Remember that innocent young man we first saw tinkering with droids and playing with a model fighter, long ago and far away?) In Episode IV, C3PO rises to his greatest degree of independent action and decision in order to get Luke out of the garbage compactor. If his rambling had included a few lines on the subject, he could have made it clear that he was malfunctioning.

If the writers of the next episode choose to go more deeply into the problems of being a droid, they have several options for

showing him either working through the conflict to become more human, or getting stuck by his mechanical limitations.

In general, I was impressed with "Empire" as a balance to "Star Wars", and by looking back I can see how much coming events had cast their shadows. It isn't really surprising that Luke rushes to rescue his friends, and ends up being rescued by them. When Luke first attempts to get Leia out of the Death Star's death row, she is the one who blasts a hole in the wall for him to climb through. In the final attack on the Death Star, Luke is saved from Darth Vader by Han. Now Luke has been unable to save Han, as he is forced to learn that life is neither fair, nor neat, nor even reasonable.

A friend who enjoyed the movie enormously refers to Luke as a version of Jedermann, which is certainly closer than heroic comparisons. In Episode IV, I doubted that even the heroes had a right to come out of a trash compactor in spotless white, and now we go to the other extreme. At the end of the light-saber duel Luke is not only wounded, exhausted, ragged, dirty, and crying, but his nose is running. You can't get much more unheroic than that. Probably the worst thing that happens to him is that he loses faith in Ben Kenobi. I am waiting to see if he can pick the pieces up any better than the rest of us can.

Patricia S. Patterson
Cary, NC

Dear Ms. Mavor:

Do you mind if I sound off about the Harlan Ellison interview in the November *Amazing*? What concerns me is not his fiction per se, but rather his attitude behind his fiction.

James Gunn once referred to Ellison as "the perennial angry young man of science fiction." And anger, of course, can be very useful — if it is directed against persons and trends that exploit, abuse, or humiliate one's fellow man.

But what about a writer who criticizes people who enjoy Kentucky Fried Chicken? People who watch Charlie's Angels?

People who, in short, are simply being people? Not all of us are gifted with brilliant minds; we can't all be intellectual snobs. But can't a writer find any redeeming qualities in the masses to make up for this so-called deficiency?

Surely in a culture as vast, complex and multi-faceted as ours there is room for both cheap novels and Norman Mailer — and, to be fair, for Harlan Ellison's diatribes, if Jan Q. Publics like myself can reply to them.

Mary Anne Landers
Russellville, AR

Yes, there is room for all of it, but as Ellison says, why not shoot for the best? And the world really does need shit-disturbers like him to make us think, shake us loose from complacency. It's up to you — you can have coq au vin or you can hop out for a bucket. One takes creative preparation, the other does not. Why miss so many of the exceptional experiences of living through sheer laziness? Also, is Ellison being snobbish — or inspirational?—EM

Dear Elinor,

I thought I'd write you and congratulate you on the last two issues of *Amazing*: August 1980 and November 1980 (the first on the new bimonthly schedule).

I'm especially impressed with the visual element of the magazines, particularly the cover art, and the cover layouts. In terms of appearance, your covers have improved about 500% over the past year; I now consider them to be among the best (and most eye-catching) in the field — superior to *IA'sfm* (which occasionally looks like *Astounding* circa 1932) and on a par with *F&SF* and *Analog*.

Next: what happened to the lettercol?

The stories: improving, and I especially note the recent pieces by name authors, for example — Gregory Benford's "Titan Falling"; Barry Malzberg's "They Took It All Away"; and the various Wayne Wightman pieces, all of which have been good, readable, entertaining stories. I especially look forward to the promised Harlan Ellison story. The fact that name authors are willing to write for *Amazing* indicates that they are confident that you can succeed, and the field needs magazines — particu-

larly magazines that aren't willing to fall into a repetitive routine (as, alas, *IA'sfm* seems to have done in recent months). If you continue in the manner of the last two issues, circulation — and esteem — should pick up and grow. Maybe not exponentially, but — if you can hold on — slow and steady usually does win the race. (An example of that is *F&SF*, which has maintained a fairly low circulation of 60,000 for more than a decade — and which, over that time, has published more top-notch SF than any of its larger competitors).

Concluding: I'm pleased with the evolution of the magazine over the past year, I look forward to what is still to come, and I shall keep my subscription renewed. The best of luck to you.

Dave Stover
Tillsonburg, Ontario, Canada

*Thanks, Dave, for your comments and good wishes. To be favorably compared with our competition is gratifying. We have utmost respect for all of them and do hope for a bigger slice of the readership pie in the future. Our problem now is not quality, but simply the quantity of readers who know about us. With no advertising campaign in the budget, we must depend on word of mouth; a little help from our friends (?) in the fanspaper business; and better distribution — a matter which has recently been taken care of. WE ARE GOING TO MAKE IT WORK. By the way, Wayne Wightman's *FIRST* science fiction sale was to *AMAZING* ("The White Ones", Nov., 1979) and his latest was to *OMNI*. Your ranking him with Benford and Malzberg ("name authors") is certainly astute, if not quite accurate; we claim him as one of our *NEW* discoveries. P.S. Hope you enjoyed the brilliant Ellison story in our January '81 issue.—EM*

Dear sirs;

I was just reading your latest — and last — issue of *FANTASTIC*, and wanted to wish you luck on your bimonthly amalgamation with *AMAZING*. For some reason I have always preferred *FANTASTIC*, but I suppose the venerable history of your other title made it the logical choice for the combination magazine. *AMAZING* and *FANTASTIC* are the best of the lot. It drives me crazy when I read that your circulation numbers are also the worst.

Hopefully a bimonthly appearance will boost your sales.

What distinguishes your magazines are the stiff covers, the superb artwork, the lively format, and the high fantasy content. What depresses them is the small number of pages, the long wait between issues, and the lack of big name contributors. As to the last point, I like it, because it suggests you are more open to good work from unknowns.

I am sorry you axed the letter page — it lent a continuity to the magazines. I do not like the games section or the fan section, which fulfill too specific a function in a publication that wants to grow. Ease up on the science fact — science fact magazines are a glut on the market. On the other hand, soft science speculation and editorializing are appropriate.

To leave off the standard “fan” suggestions and get really serious for a minute — why don’t you print original fantasy ideas? Fantasy, you know, has much more diversity of style and content than SF, yet what I read in the magazines has a sameness to it, a kind of slick genre gloss. Why must commercial fantasy come out of a cookie cutter?

I am a little weary of wizards and demons and dragons and funny little elves. I want stories like Bradbury’s “The Wind” and Collier’s “Evening Primrose,” stories that depend for their effect on mood rather than a flimsy plotline which surely every reader had heard a hundred times in one slightly altered form or another. When fantasy writers lack a clear vision they inject “Humor” into the stories, or tie their banalities up in a “clever” little twist at the end. I must be in the minority, but I don’t find this kind of transparent manipulation entertaining. I think people would enjoy stories that are different in style and tone from what they have slavishly been led to expect, were they ever permitted to read them.

The upshot of all this is that I wish you would break with tradition occasionally and print something novel and striking. Take a chance and see what happens. You never know, it might be the magazine’s salvation. There is a limited advantage to be gained by selling the same product as your competitors sell, but much in selling something new that people want.

Donald Tyson

Halifax, Nova Scotia

P.S. By the way, in the Oct/80 *FANTASTIC* the “Small One” was quite good, although it should have been set in the Europe of the middle ages. “The Songs Are of Earth” was quite bad. But Steinhauer gets points for at least trying to be poetic, which few writers have the guts to do.

D.T.

We plan to feature some big name contributors — those who can work with us at our current rates — and still maintain the tradition of nurturing new talent. We think we have broken far away from wizards and elves in many of our fantasy presentations: “Black Hole” (Linda Grossman, Feb., 1980 *AMAZING*) dealt with a woman’s journey into insanity — or another dimension; “October Blood” (Gregory Fitz Gerald, May, 1980 *AMAZING*) was about a woman who was stripped bare of home and belongings by a bunch of Halloween hooligans; “What Happened to Her” (C.H. D’Alessio, May, 1980 *AMAZING*) featured a man who could disintegrate people with his eyes; “New Member” (David R. Bunch July, 1980 *AMAZING*) provided a symbolic and poetic trip to Purgatory (?); “The Amorous Umbrella” (Marvin Kaye, Oct., 1980 *FANTASTIC*) took a fussy professor through a literary wonderland via a magic umbrella; “Metamind” (Wayne Wightman, Aug., 1980 *AMAZING*) travelled the illusions of one man’s mind through experiences that could only be fantasy symbols in a search for truth and deliverance; “And Parity for All” (Felix Gotschalk, Nov., 1980 *AMAZING*) concerns the improbable day in the “lives” of tiny fighters in the micro-world of a computer game for children; and, of course “Run, Spot, Run” (Harlan Ellison, Jan., 1981 *AMAZING* is a sequel to the powerful “A Boy and His Dog” about a telepathic pooch and master struggling for survival in a post-holocaust world. The sequel describes mutant spiders and murderous ghosts among other things fantastic. There are many others that would qualify just as well under your description of novel and striking fantasy. Look up these past issues and check it out.—EM

Dear Mr. Gohagen & Associates:

I read the August issue of *Amazing* with much enjoyment. I especially liked "Speedplay." It was one of those short, short stories that end with a neat little twist, the kind I like so much.

The various departments were interesting: I liked the interview with Ron Goulart and "Film Focus." "Titan Falling" was excellent, although the accompanying artwork may have been a little stiff. "Visions of Diana" was also excellent and well written. It was one of those stories where I had to stop at the end and wait for the smile to leave my face before I could continue. The artwork by Gary Freeman was also very good, especially the title page of "Metamind." Wayne Wightman did an excellent job writing "Metamind." I enjoyed reading it very much.

Only gripes: no letters; and perhaps you could occasionally squeeze in a short poem, (even one an issue would be nice); and that's about it. These aren't major gripes. If they were I wouldn't be buying your magazine. So far it's been pretty good. Good luck in the future.

Augustine Gauba
Bisbee, AZ

Omar Gohagen is Elinor Mavor (and, no, she doesn't have a mustache). Associates? — Capable, discerning, enduring, and delightful Britton Bloom and Anna Gail (man and woman respectively, since some correspondents are unsure).—EM

Dear Publishers:

I was sorry to see *ASTOUNDING* change its name to *ANALOG*. It was as though we were to expect Computer Fiction. They should have capitalized on what one expected of John W. Campbell, and adapted the title *OUTSTANDING SF*.

What has this to do with *AMAZING STORIES*? Obviously you are wanting to identify with SF in your present logo, while still trying to to maintain the original identification. Well, *STORIES* used to be a separate line instead of slashing the last four letters of *AMAZING*. If you must slash, at least limit it to *SCIENCE FICTION*, putting *STORIES* below the *ZING* in a separate line. That will keep Gerns-

back's title intact and not produce a redundant *FICTION STORIES* inscription. But I have a further suggestion: Make the slash say

IDEA SCIENCE FICTION

You've earned it with the November issue. No longer standard digest size, so you stand tall. Malzberg's "They Took it all Away" — invasion ideas. Rawls' "Journey Witch" — superhuman ideas. Woolley's "Stitch in Time" — reincarnation ideas. (Well, it insisted it wasn't a clone idea.) Bunch's "Strange Rider" — senior citizen ideas. Brown's "Fear Therapy" — socio-economics ideas. Gotshalk's "Parity" — Game ideas. Detling's "Tutor" — communication ideas. Wightman's "Amorphobe" — psychiatric ideas. Idea development is the authors' problem. It should be exciting and worth reading.

Walter A. Coslet
Helena, MT

We'll keep the title the way it is, but will continue to present intriguing ideas — a nice variety in each issue. Thanks for your comments.—EM

Dear *Amazing/Fantastic* Editor,

Enclosed is a check for one year's fine reading. I used to read *Amazing* and *Fantastic* regularly and held subscriptions to both. After several years, they seemed to get "tired", less challenging, less entertaining. I do not fault former Editor White for this. He was doing the best he could with what he received and invariably his editorials were the most interesting part of both magazines.

I followed the ups and downs of the magazines in places like *Locus* and the *SFWA Bulletin*. I shook my head sadly that the premier sf zine, the very first, was on the skids and seemed doomed to vanish over the event horizon of the black hole of failed publications.

Then . . . the two were bought up by the present owner. I held my breath, figuratively and wondered.

I wonder no more. Here's my money. I am convinced. *Amazing* looks good, reads good and is worth supporting. Kudos.

Charles Spano
Scranton, PA

Tell all your friends. — EM

The Interstellar Connection

Book Reviews

Tom Staicar

Firelord by Parke Godwin. Doubleday & Co., \$12.95.

Drawing his material from sources in myth as well as history, Parke Godwin has created his own unique version of the life of King Arthur. The story moves forward in bold fashion through the legendary events which shaped English history. Thanks to Godwin we have the chance to focus upon the emotions and rivalries behind the scenes of the military actions.

The writer is in control all the way in this masterfully written fantasy. His use of language is brilliant at all times, fascinating to watch as the Arthurian story unfolds. Where another writer might have become lost in the metaphors and archaic language, Godwin uses these only when most effective, returning to clear and direct statements to keep the reader on track.

In one scene, a short-term military objective has to be held against the invading Saxons. Rather than tell the tale of glory and victory from offstage, Godwin has Arthur and the rest in the thick of hand-to-hand combat, dealing in the brutal, dirty degrading, and terrifying ways in which war is actually fought. There was no glamor as exhausted, frightened English soldiers rode on horses against nearly invisible lines of sharpened sticks

Tom Staicar, 34, lives with his wife Joy in Ann Arbor, MI, where he is Supervisor in the Interlibrary Loan Office and selector of SF acquisitions for the University of Michigan Graduate Library.

An avid reader of SF since the age of 10, Staicar has written about it for such magazines as the *Writer's Digest*, *Today's Student*, and *Science Fiction Review*.

FIRELORD

Parke Godwin



laid in the ground by Saxons. As the horses were slashed and the riders fell, Saxon spears rained down on them. The English regrouped several times, losing men and mounts each pass through. Finally, the objective is lost anyway, and all the work and death was for nothing, as is much of real war's fighting. This sort of battle realism sets Parke Godwin above the usual heroic medals and honors school of historical fiction. His battles are real.

Much of the content of the novel is found in the emotional confrontations and relationships. Merlin, Mordred, Guenevere, Lancelot and Arthur are shown in personal interaction as real people.

Firelord is enthralling reading and Parke Godwin is a genuinely fine writer.

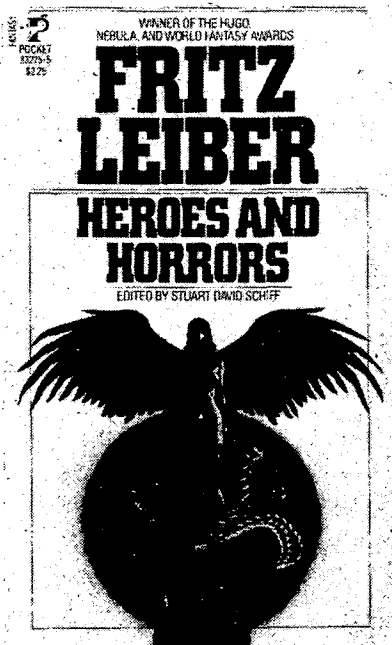
Heroes and Horrors by Fritz Leiber. Edited by Stuart David Schiff. Pocket Books, \$2.25.

Fritz Leiber is one of the finest writers working in the field of imaginative literature. He produces what is perhaps the widest range of quality fiction of any author of fantasy, SF, or horror. *Heroes and Horrors* shows this range in the form of two Fafhrd and Gray Mouser heroic

fantasy tales, a Lovecraftian novelette of the Cthulhu Mythos, the untold story of Edgar Allen Poe's final week on Earth, and five stories of horror written in Leiber's inimitable manner.

In case you are not yet familiar with Fritz Leiber horror stories, be advised tht they are not conveniently tucked away in a Gothic haunted house. They are set in contemporary places peopled with average folks. This factor makes the horror all the more chilling in stories like the award-winning "Belsen Express."

Heroes and Horrors shows the wonderful (and horrible) things that happen when a master turns his hand to horror writing.



Science Fiction and Fantasy Authors, A Bibliography of First Printings of Their Fiction Edited by L.W. Currey. G.K. Hall & Co., \$48.00

Index to Science Fiction Anthologies and Collections by Williams Contento. G.K. Hall & Co., \$28.00.

L.W. Currey's comprehensive and carefully compiled bibliographic work will be a welcome addition to the shelves of SF

scholars, researchers, and especially collectors. It is a means of accurately identifying the output of authors in terms of publication of the first editions of their books. Arranged alphabetically by full names (with a key to the often better known pseudonyms), Currey's book shows SF and non-genre books where available. This makes the Silverberg and Asimov lists quite long, although in no case does Currey attempt to locate every single non-SF book by a given writer. Barry N. Malzberg, for example, has a listing for his Lone Wolf action novels and such porno books as *Nympho Nurse*, along with a considerable number of SF books. Currey decided not to widen the scope to include plot summaries, critical appraisals, or brief biographies, compiling instead a painstakingly produced reference work to first printings of SF books.

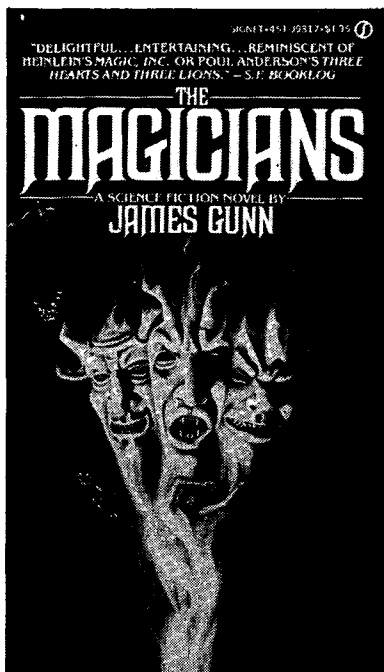
Williams Contento's *Index* is the culmination of the dreams, hopes, humble beginnings, and labors of all who tried to do what he has accomplished: a comprehensive list of the titles, authors, and anthology appearances of all the science fiction stories up to now. The useful feature of this listing is that, for the first time in an index of this kind, one can look up information using any approach (contents of a certain anthology, all the stories written by a certain author, the title of a given story traced back to its appearances in magazine and book form).

Contento's book is an obvious triumph and many people in the field now refer to the "Contento Index" as the definitive place to look up a story's history. Well worth the price not only for libraries and collectors but for serious readers and fans, Contento's work should be in every SF collection.

The Magicians by James Gunn. Signet, \$1.95.

Casey Kingman is a mathematics instructor turned private detective. He didn't mean to get mixed up in a witches' convention held at his hotel or to fall in love with a beautiful witch who had been marked for death by a satanic demon from the netherworld. Kingman's knowledge of hexes, chants, spells and counterspells was negligible.

James Gunn decided to write *The Magicians* in a style somewhat suggestive



of Robert Heinlein, with dashes of Humphrey Bogart and some elements of books like *Rosemary's Baby*. The blend works very well here, with genuine suspense building from the first page to last. The frequent digressions into the brief history of scientific explanations of magic serve to slow down the pace of the story but the facts they impart prove to be interesting and an enhancement to our suspension of disbelief.

The sustained love interest verges on being overdone but then stays at just the right level, building our sympathy for Casey and his witch friend Ariel, who join forces with a kindly old magician named Uriel to fight off the plot by the deadly Solomon Magus to revive true evil in the world and reign supreme over mankind.

The novel is SF in the sense of de Camp's *Complete Enchanter*, as other universes and mathematical equations are the sources of "magical" powers. *The Magicians* is exciting and fun to read.

Frank Frazetta: Book Four. Edited by Betty Ballantine. Peacock Press/Bantam, \$8.95.

Long-time fans of comics, Conan, or Edgar Rice Burroughs have been fans of

Frank Frazetta for many years. Since 1975, when the first book of his illustrations came out from Peacock/Bantam, his works have taken on another dimension of popularity around the world. Wizards, creatures, barbarians, smooth-muscle women of Pellucidar, and tail-lashing reptiles all came to life on the seething canvases of this gifted artist.

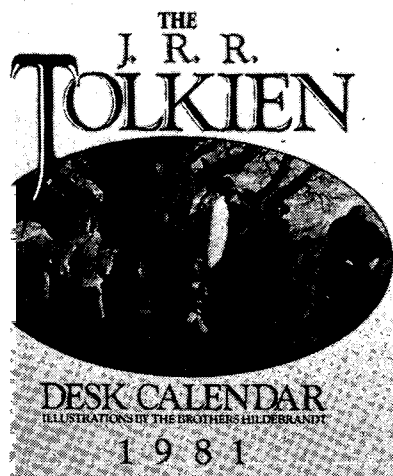
Book Four does not show any signs of exhausting the talents and imagination of Frazetta. Some early sketches and preliminary artwork here will be of less interest than the majority of color paintings and poster art included, but the book contains more beauty and color on its coated-stock pages than a half a dozen other artists' works could have produced. Before Boris Vallejo and a host of others became popular, Frazetta led the way, showing how a young illustrator could build a world-wide popularity beginning with minor assignments and a major talent.

Ballantine Books, as usual, has come out with a line of beautiful calendars for 1981. *Cosmos 1981* (\$6.95) presents astronomical and space scene from the PBS television series starring Carl Sagan. A Martian's eye view of the Viking Lander, closeups of Jupiter, and satellite views of the Earth are some of the selections.

The Empire Strikes Back 1981 Calendar (\$6.95) follows on the heels of last year's 1 million copy seller *Star Wars*. Anyone who enjoyed the film will be pleased with the choices of stills taken from *The Empire Strikes Back* for this calendar. The centerspread features a painting of combat on the planet Hoth.

The J.R.R. Tolkien Desk Calendar 1981 (\$6.95) is a respective of thirteen favorite Brothers Hildebrandt paintings from past wall calendars. As I said before in this magazine, no one has been able to do a better job with Tolkien than the twins have. The desk calendar contains ample space for notes and memos interspersed with color illustration pages.

The J.R.R. Tolkien Calendar (\$6.95) is another "great illustrators" edition, which means a variety of artists' visions were included. The overall calendar is again worth buying and displaying, with variations in individual taste accounting for differences in reactions to specific



artists.

I like Darrell Sweet and Michael Herring's work more than I like Douglas Beekman's, for example. The absolute standout is Rowena Morrill, whose vivid, powerful conceptions of the Tolkien scenes are much stronger and more vivacious than the others'. Morrill's illustrations on several book covers lately have shown that she is definitely an artist who is heading for the top of the field. I would like to see some publishers put together collections of Rowena Morrill's paintings one of these days.

Boris Vallejo Fantasy Calendar 1981. Workman Pub. Co., \$5.95.

There is only one Boris Vallejo, dominant figure in today's fantasy art. Often using himself as the model for his male heroes, and invariably beautiful women for their counterparts, Vallejo has achieved a purity of emotion in his art which appeals to the SF and fantasy audience in strong terms. The 1981 calendar is sensational — typically so for this young man's work. Frank Kelly Freas once said: "Boris' obvious delight in the human body illumines all his work; even his spaceships have muscles." ●

The State of the Artless

Parke Godwin &
Howard Roller

SADO-MASOCHISM, we love it. For the SF purist, there's no more painful pleasure than decrying attempts to translate the genre to film. After a summer of disgruntled viewing and reading yet one more "Elei! Elei!" in a leading SF zine, we have to bellow in the wilderness for a little perspective.

"Why?" they/you/we lament. "Why don't these dolts just film a good SF story as written?"

There are hard-rock reasons why SF film is in its flabby but lucrative condition today, and few of them have much to do with science fiction.

Look, face it. SF film is not, never has been for the serious *aficionado*. SF by definition is a medium of ideas transmitted in words. Bradbury was SF's first prose poet. We've never seen a successful transplant of his work to film, and most have been sad. The best SF writers like Bester, Sturgeon, Miller and LeGuin have created works that obliterate the pejorative gap between SF "pulp" and mainstream "good" literature. Yet much, if not most, of what makes their work fine SF or fantasy would be unfilmable. Try shooting LeGuin's Hugo-winner, *The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas* or Sturgeon's *More Than Human*, or most of Miller's *A Canticle For Leibowitz*. With a camera, not a pen, where do you start? What does an extrapolated concept look like?

Film is a medium of visuals, historically a popular medium, most successful when it appeals to the greatest mass — in which

depressing lump you will find both the weepy heart-wringing of Frank Capra and that perennial adolescent, the "trekkie" who shows up at SF/Fancons wearing Spock ears and thumbing a copy of *Conan*.

Thus science fiction and film are a dichotomy of basics: idea vs. picture. A book or a story has time to lay out and explore an idea, and the reader, by the active participation of reading, contributes to the process. (In this respect, radio was a better medium for SF than film, since it involved the listener's active imagination). The reader can turn back to a page, re-read and consider, savor. He can lay the book aside, ruminate, come back to it, even free-associate with words. He can't yell to the theater projectionist: "Hey, run that again." A film must develop in pictures along a line of plot, able only to sketch the bare outline of a premise. Attempts at exploring concept within film parameters become talky, turgid, stupid or all of the above.

2001 is an excellent example of a concept struggling in and ultimately drowned by visuals. With all its awesome cinematic scope, it is obscure and incoherent as an idea. One has to read Clarke's book to learn that the ubiquitous slab is a teaching machine for the *Australopithecus*. And you shouldn't have to do that.

2001 set a standard for the "look" of a big SF movie, but much of this was the result of a counter-culture fluke. The movie became an "in trip" for grassheads who took their joints into the balcony and got stoned over Kubrik's apocalyptic visuals.

"Far out," sighed the *Australopithecus* in the back seats as he groped his girlfriend. "Freaky. Cosmic. Dig them lights."

Concept? He couldn't even spell it, couldn't define it except maybe as something to do with birth control. But he made the movie pay for Kubrik, and no one gets the public message quicker than a producer with big bucks riding on a picture. This one came through loud and clear. "Dazzle 'em with footwork, they'll eat it up."

Feel insulted? Why? The public has always supported spectacle before films of genuine thought. A few years after *2001*, the Russian film *Solaris* tiptoed into American theaters without fanfare. It was based on Stanislaw Lem's novel and

wrestled honestly with his brilliant, difficult ideas. It followed and explored concept from beginning to end — haunting, laconic, cryptic, not altogether successful, but achieving a lyricism on its own terms. *Solaris* played to rhapsodic reviews and empty houses and stole out of the U.S. like a defector. Americans don't go to the movies to think. By and large, they have defended themselves against thought with the tenacity of Gary Cooper saving Paulette Goddard from lascivious Mohawks.

"If it works, use it." *2001* set a pattern which was later enshrined by the landmark success of a much more entertaining film, *Star Wars*. Again the message got back: to make big money, you have to spend it, like \$30,000,000 in special effects. With this budget inflation (even more evident in the basically empty *The Empire Strikes Back*) more and more budget is put into special effects, less and less footage is available for any stray concept the hapless story may have. "Dazzle, kid. Don't think. Dazzle!"

Mazeltov. Entertaining, but what's happening to the basic speculative tenets of SF? What if? If this goes on...

Forget it. Who's asking?

Okay, counters the outraged purist, what's wrong with small-budget films centered about an idea? They used to make them. Good question. The main reason for this high-budget rut is the death of the studio system. Each studio had a B unit where, at lower budgets, a risky or offbeat picture could be made under minimal supervision or interference from the studio brass. Their success or failure was written off under yearly profit/loss. Apprentice film makers with ideas could still make *The Day the Earth Stood Still* or the lean, chilly first version of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. And doing this, they learned every facet of film production at relatively low cost. In addition, when money is tight, imagination is forced to expand and innovate. In the late 60's, Frankenheimer could still take a chance on *Seconds*, a black-and-white film ten times better as SF than *2001*. It died. The body may be viewed infrequently on the late late show.

The big studios are gone. The prime movers today are not the Mayers, the Zanucks, the Cohns who, for all their monstrous ego, were men of vision who loved the idea of making pictures. Today each film is a separate venture, a separate

profit company. The financing comes from banks, bookkeepers, bottom-line readers with their beady eyes on the projected figures clicking out of a computer, and their dry little voices say, "Before anything else, the project must make money." Some producers like Sir Lew Grade don't even begin to shoot a film until it's pre-sold to a certain amount of houses. The logic is as simple as this. The picture must profit; to profit it must draw; to draw it must contain the proven crowd-pleasers, be visually stunning, out-Herod or at least imitate the record-breaking *Star Wars*. The money men are not cretins or even anti-intellectual. Intellect and concept are irrelevant. They need what works, what equals box office. Their money's on the table, and it's seven or craps on the first roll.

So the SF film, beginning perhaps with its valiant little idea is over-shot, over-scored, over-long, crammed to its celluloid gills with special effects, matte shots and anything else proven popular with the uncritical, TV nourished viewer who buys the ticket that earns back their formidable print cost. They couldn't care less if the arc of the film is sagging like a bride's first cake. Editing is secondary. (Don't cut that shuttle-craft shot. I know it's too long, but it's *visual*.)

There's another factor that has less to do with money than psychology. Film periodically goes through a phase where new gadgetry becomes an involuted fascination to the film maker himself. In a recent *Times* article, George Lucas referred to his studio as a toy factory. Tinkering, playing with special effects like advanced optical printers has created a whole techno-philosophy. Technicians are totally seduced by their own ability to matte any five shots into one. This becomes a vision, an end in itself, to which plot, characters and concept are poor seconds. Lucas' crew seem to be making endless special effects triumphs to please themselves. Small wonder that *The Empire Strikes Back* emerges as a plotless fragment ending virtually where it began except for the strangely uninteresting revelation that Darth Vader is Luke Skywalker's dad. The most interesting character in the whole film is Yoda — a bonus from Lucas' toy shop in stop-motion animation and multi-frame printing. When a muppet steals a \$30,000,000 movie, you know why Alec

Guinness asked five percent of the gross on *Star Wars*, got it, and ran like hell.

Enough kvetching; where does it leave us? Given that SF is a medium of ideas and film a medium of story-in-pictures, is an idea SF film impossible? We don't think so. It just requires hard work, thought and daring. Lotsa luck.

The problem, not an easy one, is to strike a balance between concept and visual imagination. It has been done. Films like *This Island Earth*, the above mentioned *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, the first (1956) *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *Forbidden Planet* all showed a combination of workable ideas and compelling technical work. *Forbidden Planet* is a good example of a film neatly balanced between visuals and concept. Its premise is the familiar one of technology offering man abilities he's emotionally unready for. The "monster from the id" is an idea tempting to explore in its ramifications, and a book could do so, but the film wisely resists the lure and presents the concept as part of the plot line which moves to a logical, exciting conclusion. The "monster" is more suggested than seen. When it does appear in a terrifyingly effective segment, it's a triumph for Ib Uwerke, former Disney animator. The film is perhaps lightweight in the view of purists and definitely cutesy at times, but it understands what a movie can and can't do.

Forbidden Planet was a product of the 50's. At that time SF films were a relative novelty and largely unregulated by the money men or other self-styled experts. They had, for better or worse, a viewpoint. The 50's decade was a period of post-war depression and nuclear paranoia. The nightmare of atomic destruction, of communist infiltration, became grist for the SF movie mill. Monsters of all kinds, usually spawned by the Bikini experiments, slithered, crawled and oozed off the screen. Alien humanoids descended on our world to invade our minds and bodies. You could recognize them by their lack of emotion, their absence of feeling coupled with lethal intellect. Sound like brain washing? Though most of these films were poor, even laughable, they had common themes that resonated in our daily lives and fears. Hence the best of them had a context that still survives. *The Day the Earth Stood Still* evokes Ray Bradbury, *Body Snatchers* is a McCarthy

era film, etc.

Current films don't have this context or viewpoint. Hell, they're not even looking for one. They remade *Body Snatchers* with better special effects, but with less impact, because something visceral like paranoia is replaced with the less immediate, certainly less dramatic California sub-culture. Characters read Velikovsky, have identity crises and seek advice from EST-like gurus. They dig it in L.A., but in Peoria, where's the gut-identification?

Close Encounters disappoints in a similar fashion. The picture is exciting as long as it hints of things to come. The scene in which Richard Dreyfuss' truck sits underneath a spaceship is beautifully timed both as comedy and menace, but when we finally see the aliens, the picture proves bankrupt in cinematic imagination or any other kind. What you get is a lo-o-ong light show à la 2001 and blurred, vaguely humanoid shapes and a kind of gee whiz reaction from everyone involved. This, we suppose, is to pass as sense of wonder but doesn't make it. At its core, the film is empty.

As entertainment, *Star Wars* is a visual feast and marvelous fun, though one viewing was fun enough, thanks. As science fiction or even fantasy, its whole concept was clichéd well before 1940. The film is philosophically laughable, but its paying audience has concurrently swallowed a ghoulish of Born Again Christianity, reincarnation, astrology and scientology. They'll buy the marshmallows mysticism of "The Force" without so much as a dubious squint. George Lucas could care less. He knows when to cut to the chase; for the rest, he'll cry all the way to the bank. "If it works, use it."

Star Wars spawned the inevitable imitators. *Battle Beyond the Stars* is a space version of *The Magnificent Seven*, providing incidental intelligence in the midst of its mundane western plot and somewhat less costly (\$5,000,000) special effects. One character is a space cowboy who plays the harmonica and likes to drink. Another is a race of multiple cloned beings sharing a single consciousness, but these elements are all subordinated to the "blow up their ship before they blow up ours" ethic that prevails.

Alien alone shows promise among recent SF films. Beautifully designed and directed, with excellent special effects

when called for (notably the animated baby alien), the plot is a valid up-dating of Howard Hawks' *The Thing* (1951). The 50's social relationships are rethought into 70's terms. The main character is a woman rather than the John Wayne type played by Kenneth Tobey. Where a 50's villain would be an icy intellectual (therefore not to be trusted) scientist, this character is revealed as a robot in the employ of the company the ship flies for. Impersonal business, not them furriners, becomes the true 70's villain. The macho character (Yaphet Kotto) is presented as a slob and a schlep, definitely a 70's perspective. Sense of wonder is left to the camera which handles it admirably, leaving the crew to slouch about in their grungy dungarees, bitching about pay and overtime and the other things cooped up crew members would really have on their minds. The rest is good design, camera work and excellent cutting. In all fairness, the production muddled a few points which were clarified by a reading of Foster's novelization. In a large theater with a sound system like World War II, some of the dialogue tended to get lost under the boom, though this problem disappeared in a more modest house. Of all the big budget SF of the last few years, *Alien* alone stands out as proof that something significant can be done in the genre beyond golly-wow light shows. But good at it was, no trend seems to be arising.

So, what does the future portend? What'll we get next year? Ultimately the paying public appears to buy the current mindlessness and pretentiousness, as in *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, where the pseudo-philosophy seems to be "spare the Roddenberry and spoil the film."

Until they — and the hell with they — until you/I/we tire of empty light shows and start hitting the film makers where it hurts, by staying away from theaters in droves, you're gonna get more gee whiz, Buck Rogers, thunderously vacuous sound tracks, and ravishing but empty productions at half a million per camera set-up. Lucas plans seven more *Star Wars* episodes. As with *Empire*, he'll probably make back his negative cost in the first forty-eight hours of release.

The mind boggles . . . and goes back to sleep.

"It's a GREAT plot, George, it can't miss. There's this big humongous

digestive tract that's swallowing the whole galaxy. Williams can score the belches... beautiful. And Princess Leia's got the last Di-Gel in the universe. Do you see it, George? And wait! In the kiss-off, the thing vomits the whole schmeer on Robert Heinlein. Have we got a movie...?" ●

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PROF SAID LANDRY died of hate, that self-hate kind that everybody (meaning everybody human) seemed to have. He said that's also why so many laughed.

Me, I don't know. It could've been that. But it could've been because that was his last good shirt he was wearing.

He tore it where everybody was always tearing them, on the Lower Belt. He was working point on our side of the slagline, trying to poke loose a clod that had gotten stuck on the runners in between Belts. It was jumpy duty trying to reach in between there, what with the Upper going one way carrying the ore cubes and the Lower dragging the slag back the other and all the time watching that the tip of your slagpike didn't get snatched into the gears. We were always a lot more scared of the Upper, since it was head-high and all and I imagine that's what Landry was doing — watching out for his eyes — because he had his head sucked down so tight into his shoulders that he edged tummy-first into the Lower edge. A prong snagged his shirt and tore the whole front of it loose just like that.

No big deal, really. We had all had that happen to us working point. And it wasn't like he was hurt himself. It was just the shirt. I figured he would just cuss and kick like everybody else. But he didn't. He went nuts.

First he let out this scream you could hear from one end of the Beltline to the other, over the sound of scraping pikes, over the voices and the furnace — even over the rattling Belts themselves. Then he put a boot on the Lower and hopped right up on the Upper, kicking cubes off and jabbing his pike into the beltfab.

The Bluenose LIMIT

John Steakley

It was funny at first. Everybody stopped scraping and followed along beside him, laughing and cheering and yelling catcalls. The Prof, working pointback like always (because of his age), was closest and when he cupped his hands and yelled: "Ahab Landry strikes!" everybody laughed all the louder. Even Landry laughed at that, but I think it was just to make it look like he was less into it than he really was.

Because he was serious. I could tell. He was all red-faced and puffing like mad, bounding along on the rollers and stabbing away like beltfab was his worst enemy. And I'll be damned if he didn't punch a hole clean through — a good six-inch gash.

Everybody cheered like mad then. We screamed and clapped and held our pikes up over our heads and I figured that was that, Landry had made his point.

But I guess he hadn't. Because he didn't even slow down. He just kept on poking and prodding. Made me nervous, watching him still at it like that.



Illustrated by Gary Freeman

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It got to Prof too, who yelled, "Well done, Landry! A clean kill and a clear victory!" while leading another round of applause and just generally trying to win their tips up.

I don't think Landry even heard him. He kept stabbing away and punched another hole.

"Hey, Landry! Going for a hotfoot?" yelled Bart from beside me while motioning towards the furnace with his pike. Everybody laughed. "Hothead, more like it," popped Avery. "Gonna roast his ass if he don't move it." Most everybody laughed at that too.

It was still fun then.

About then you could feel the heat. We had already gotten that close. Landry felt it, too. But all it did was speed him up. He punched another hole alongside the others.

We were starting to see his plan. He was trying to rip holes in a line so as to tear the whole Belt loose and jam it up when it went over the hump and across the furnace gears. But there wasn't near enough time — everybody could see that. Hell, I was surprised that he'd done what he had. I guess I'd just assumed that since beltfab couldn't burn, it couldn't be ripped. Or maybe I just figured we couldn't touch anything built by Blues.

Prof was getting real edgy. "C'mon, Landry," he said in a nervous voice, "enough already. Get off there!" But he was drowned out by a bunch of others yelling stuff like, "Ride 'em, Landry!" and "Over the hump!" and still laughing.

Landry was looking a little frantic, glancing back over his shoulder at the fire all the time. But he didn't stop. He just made another hole.

The heat was getting pretty intense. Other people were getting nervous, too. The guys shouting, "Jump!" outnumbered the ones shouting, "Ride 'em!" But not by much.

Jack appeared finally, cutting off my view for a second with that huge back of his. He shouldered everybody aside and stuck an arm up to Landry.

"Time's up, Landry," he said firmly.

Landry recognized that voice. He glanced down briefly. "Just a couple more," he said.

Jack was pissed. "One more like Hell! You got ten meters to the hump!"

Landry glanced quickly back at the glow. "Catch me," he said, still stabbing away.

"Bullshit," snapped Jack. "Jump now or burn."

"Catch me," said Landry again, stabbing.

"Nope. Now."

Landry sort of erupted. His face got even redder and his voice was so vicious it seemed to be ripping its way out of him.

"Suit your damned self, then!" he snarled and ripped at a gash.

Jack stared. Then Landry looked back down again, but different, like he was pleading and Something passed back and forth because Jack suddenly nodded. He even kind of smiled — like the old Jack. Then he trotted on ahead down the steps alongside the hump, scattering people with those big shoulders. He picked a good spot on the safety rail and waited. His face was blank.

Everybody crowded down beside him into the heat, leaving him room to reach and all, but not wanting to miss a thing. Some of us were maybe too eager. But, dammit, it WAS exciting. And God knows, it was new.

Landry, his face pouring flickering sweat, punched one more hole. That left him with only a couple of inches to go. He tensed for one more thrust.

"Landry!!!" roared Jack, sounding final.

That seemed to snap Landry out of it. He looked down, nodded, and dropped his pike right then, just as the Belt slid over the hump and down. Landry bent his knees . . . Jack's giant hands reached up . . . Landry jumped . . .

Only he didn't.

I couldn't see for sure. Maybe a pant leg was snagged in the rip or maybe a boot. Whatever, he was stuck tight.

Now I would've screamed like Hell and I think anybody might have, at that. But all Landry did was shake his head kinda disgusted-like and say: "Typical," and then he was into that white-hot maw.

Except for the fire-roar, there wasn't a sound. We stood there, stunned. Sweating, and breathing through our mouths. Jack slowly put down his arms.

Then Wallace, a real prick, said: "Just as well. Somebody woulda turned him in for doing it anyway."

I felt like hitting him, but I didn't. Nobody did. We just went back to work.

At 6:58, two minutes before quitting time, the Belt snapped.

LITTLE PAULIE was there at the schoolyard fence. "Hi, Hughie! How ya doin', Hughie!" he yelled to show off for the other four-year-olds who'd probably get smacked for calling their fathers anything besides Dad or Pop. It made me feel good to see how such a small thing could please him so much and it was the least I could do. Or maybe the most, seeing as how I still hadn't told him I wasn't his real father. And wasn't going to, either.

When I picked him up, he snuffled his little face against my chest to get the most Cleaner smell out of my overalls.

"I love Cleaner smell," he said like always. "Don't you, Hughie?" And, like always, I said I did. But I hated it. Like everything else Blue.

We had to detour around Mall East on the way home. I couldn't see why over the barriers and Blues never bother to give reasons. Had to walk all the way to Pitt East Square before doubling back.

There was a Blue there.

He sat in an open hover looking bored and watching the crowds padding by a couple of stories or so beneath him. Lots of the crowds were watching him back. Except for tapes and the like, most people had never actually seen one, even after five years.

He was a big one, even for them. Eight and a half feet, easy. Call it eight or nine hundred pounds. And all of it that damned baby blue. I shivered a little when I saw him. It wasn't just the size that spooked me, or the color. It wasn't even them looking so human.

Nope, what got to me was them being so gōddamned pretty.

I had once seen a whole hoverload touring the factory and there hadn't been a single ugly in the bunch. All gorgeous, all bored, and all naked except for those little skirt-things of theirs. Like having the statues roaming around loose in the museum flexing at the tourists.

It had scared Hell out of me. It still did.

Paulie loved 'em, though. Said something about blue being a friendly color and brought out a whole slew of pix he had collected showing Blues playing with smiling human children. Paulie ate that up, sitting for hours looking at them spread out on the floor. Sometimes he would trade pix with other kids in deals too complicated for adults to understand.

I hated the pix, of course. I had a particularly bad nightmare over the one showing five kids sitting astride each bicep.

Paulie had fallen asleep on my shoulder. I knew he would've wanted me to

wake him up for the sight of a real-live Blue. But I let him sleep. Didn't even look myself when we passed underneath. Seemed to me we spent too damn much time looking up to them as it was.

Still, there was Paulie's future to think about . . .

Damn, but I hated to think of my boy as one of those little bluenose punks. But if he was going to have it any better than me, what choice was there? It was damn near unheard of to get anywhere without some Blue's help. Oh, maybe if you were a genius of some kind or the son of one.

Paulie wasn't either. So, to find a decent place in the world, Paulie would need to please a Blue.

To be a bluenose, sucking around 'em and fawning over everything they said or did like house pets. Well, I hoped he'd turn out to be a successful one, at least. Bad enough having to crawl without getting anything out of it. About the only thing I had to be glad of was that I didn't need to do that. I couldn't go much further down, so why be a puppy?

Of course, Prof said we were all bluenoses, not just those first traitors or the more current slime. Every day we stayed alive under their rule, he said, we'd each get a little more blue there. Said the next generation wouldn't mind a bit. They won't know any better and, besides, most of them will be too busy doing it to think about it.

Well, maybe that's good. Better for Paulie not to be ashamed of himself all the time like a lot of folks. And why shouldn't he? Hell, he wasn't even around Before. He had nothing to try and forget.

But I did. I had to forget the world as it was, when men still ruled the Earth and I was a steelworker instead of a slob that scraped up slag dust for an automated robot.

But little Paulie shouldn't mind. He never knew an Earth without Blues. He'd get along. No choice.

Just the same, I knew I hoped like Hell he would refuse. And felt ashamed for hoping it because Paulie was a good one who deserved more than slag. It wouldn't be fair to let on to him about how I felt. It was a Blue's Earth nowadays, like it or not.

ANN ELBOWED her way through the crowded tables and put the steaming plates down before me. Then she leaned over Paulie's side of the booth to wake him up with what they call a butterfly kiss. Paulie, playing possum (and with me under strict oath of secrecy), jerked up at the first gentle touch of her eye lashes across his cheek and threw his arms around her neck.

Ann shrieked: "You little ambusher!" and countered with his most dreaded nemesis: precision tickling. Never remotely equal to that, Paulie jumped away to the far side of the booth, giggling madly.

"Can't take it, huh?" she challenged, feinting a bit. Paulie shook his head warily, holding his arms to his sides to protect vital areas. She sat down on the edge of the seat. "Miss me, Paulie?" she asked, continuing with the next stage of their greeting. Paulie shook his head curtly from side to side as always.

Pouting, she asked: "Not even a little bit?" Paulie shook his head even harder, but a grin had begun to peek out of the corner of his mouth.

"Ann!!!" shouted the manager of the diner. All three of us cringed a little. Ann sighed and stood up, pushing the hair from her eyes. "Eat it all up, you," she ordered Paulie. She only said: "Hi, Hughie," to me, but as she did she rested her warm hand on my shoulder. I managed something back and then watched her fight through the smoke and noise to the next order. I could've watched her for

days. Even in that filthy waitress uniform, she was beautiful. Sometimes I would imagine that Paulie's mother had been something like Ann.

WILLIE AND RAY from the slagdump crew sat down beside me at the bar and started bet-talk about tomorrow's Games. Seemed that a Blue was supposed to attend in person. Each man had a different opinion about what that meant easy-moneywise.

They ended up betting two credits, not on the results of events, but on whether or not a certain event (The Choice of Three) would be held at all.

"Ain't no way," said Willie, "that anybody'd be dumb enough to sign up for that. Hell, it's bad enough facing three locals one after another. But trained Blueteamers? Shit."

"Somebody'll chance it," replied Ray. "The prize is just too tempting."

"What tempting? It's same as always: ten credits if you live and your choice of opponents after. Same as any Sunday."

"But a Blue's gonna be there, Willie. And he'll have that slimey little bluenosing mayor sniffing around him. Even that pig mayor will have to fight a three-winner if he's challenged. And who wouldn't like to mash *that* little squat?"

"Dammit, Ray. There ain't gonna be no threewinner 'cause there ain't nobody around can beat three Blueteamers back-to-back."

"Wait a minute. I didn't say they'd win. I said they'd try, is all."

"Not even that."

"We'll see."

"Damn right."

I wondered if either one of those two experts had ever so much as considered actually entering the Games. Not likely. Not even single-duel, much less Choice of Three. I had thought about it once, years ago. Before Paulie. I entered single-duel, but chickened at the ramp. Did learn one thing, though: Willie and Ray were stupid to think it had anything to do with guts.

It had to do with being too tired.

Suddenly I remembered that Landry had told me he was going to fight tomorrow. I wondered if that's what his "typical" was about.

Our bunch started wandering in. I waved and talked a bit and drank, of course, getting the most of my one night a week. Paulie slept soundly in my arms, unaffected by the swirling Saturday night blabber.

Later on, Prof, on the stool beside me, leaned forward against the bar and raised one finger in that actor way he's got when spouting beer-talk. Meaning Blue-talk.

"What could the President have done? He had no real power."

I don't remember who he was talking to except that he was fat. "Huh?" he replied. "The President of the United States was the most powerful dude in the whole world!"

"Then why," asked Prof, "did the Blues kick him out to make do like the rest of us?"

"'Cause he wouldn't sell out to those Blue bastards like those other greedy bums. He was too straight to do that."

"Nonsense," replied Prof pleasantly. "The fact is, the President had nothing to sell. Only the people with real clout — industries, unions, oil companies — could cash in on the Takeover."

"And they sure as shit did," whined the fat man. "In one helluva big hurry."

"Too true," said Prof, taking a long sip. "May syphilis strike them all."

"I still think the President told 'em no," said fat, getting misty-eyed.

"Then why didn't they kill him like the others who refused?"

"Uh . . . he was too big for that."

Prof laughed. "My dear fellow, no President of our choosing has been that big since the nineteenth century. No. The President was simply ignored. I doubt that he suspected much more than the rest of us suckers. Remember all those lovely Rose Garden toasts about the Brotherhood of the Stars? He was just as gullible as the rest of us. Even made that pitiful speech about sending air strikes if the Blueships didn't stop landing." Prof sighed. "I don't think he realized even then that it was all over."

That was Prof's basic Saturday night. His theory was that the Blues grabbed up the really powerful handful of men and women who actually ran the world. They snatched them months before anyone else ever heard of the Blues. Then they offered them the moon in return for aiding the inevitable, but not necessarily bloody, Blue Takeover. Prof figured the two meteors that struck about that time were really demonstrations of Blue muscle to help prove their point to the captives. Plus the obvious threat.

"So," Prof would say, "they sold us out, Hughie. They spread the word that the Blues were mankind's big break, while dismantling our armies and communications systems. That's how they took over so fast, Hughie. It's the only way they could have. You can't enslave an entire planet overnight without a lot of busy nights beforehand."

I said I still didn't buy it. Those folks could've done something! They could've faked it on the ships, then spread the alarm when they got back to Earth. Prof would smile at this.

"Why, Hughie. To ensure even more humans killed?"

"It'd been worth it to beat 'em."

"Us? Beat Blueships and Blue weapons?"

"Well, we might have."

"We might. But those powerful few didn't believe we could. In fact, I imagine they truly believed that they were helping Earth. That they were making the best of the inevitable."

"Best is right," I said sourly. "Lookit those bastards living good."

"Only the icing, Hughie. But probably the deciding factor at that. If mankind is sure to lose, why must all men lose?"

I would always steam a bit then, knowing it figured that way. But not liking it.

I once asked Prof straight out: "Do you think we had a chance to stop them?"

"I don't know, Hughie. I just don't know. Probably not."

"Still," I insisted stubbornly, "we should've tried."

"We fucking sure should have!!!"

When I looked quickly over at Prof, I saw he was looking way into the distance with a pair of eyes that looked dead as Hell. When Prof would talk like that it made me wonder about who he had been Before and about how come he was working slagline with the rest of us when he was so smart and all?

Was he hiding? Was he one of those people who were offered so much to betray us? And did he refuse? Tell 'em to shove it?

Whenever his eyes and voice did that hard trick of his, I wondered about that. But I never asked him. Nobody did. Those days, what difference did it make?

ANN CAME in still wearing her waitress uniform. Nobody had dress-up clothes anymore, of course. Except for bluenoses. But it seemed tougher on women.

Jack wasn't with her for some reason. She searched the room a bit for him, then headed toward me. She smiled that smile she had that always made me sit

up straight, then took the stool beside mine. For just a second, I pretended that there was no Paulie in my lap and that she'd come over to be with me. She sighed a small sigh of fatigue and gently stroked Paulie's brow. Still fast asleep, he clamped a tiny hand around one of her fingers. She looked up to see if I had seen it.

I looked away in a hurry, embarrassed at what I'd been thinking.

I could feel her watching me. Probably she knew. Or could guess.

"Where's Jack?" I asked, covering up.

"I don't know. He's supposed to meet me. Hasn't he been here?"

"Not tonight. Come to think of it, I haven't seen him in here in four or five Saturdays. Funny."

She managed to shrug and nod and look beautiful all at once. "Something's wrong, Hughie. I know there is. Something's happened to get to him."

I told her about what had happened to Landry that morning. That seemed like part of it.

"Yes," she said in a voice so low I could barely hear her. "I think that could . . . But this has been going on quite awhile. Almost as if . . . Hughie? What was he like Before? Was he very different?"

I laughed. "God, yes," I said and thought back, remembering how he had been at first and how much he had meant to all of us. "Jack Crow was the best guy to know and work with that anybody's ever seen, Ann. Always so damned friendly and cheerful and . . . I don't know . . . Positive. He could warm up the air three feet around just grinning. For working guys like us, it was a big deal to be around somebody like that, even Before. He had everything — looks, smarts, ten-ton muscles. He could've done anything he wanted to do. You know?"

She nodded, smiling. But she didn't know what it had meant to us to know that he had picked our profession, our factory, our life. The man loved being a steelworker, was proud as Hell of it. That made us proud too. Glowing.

Inside of a month, he was every man's hero. Mine too.

"And never ashamed!" I blurted, laughing back.

"I beg your pardon?" asked Ann, confused.

"That was it with Jack. That was the whole deal, really. Once somebody asked him what his Philosophy of Life was and you know what he said? He said: 'I ain't ashamed.' Most of the guys thought he was just fooling around. And he sorta was. But he'd said it dead straight, Ann. Damn, bet he wasn't more'n eighteen at the time."

Ann looked a little startled. "Eighteen? But it's only been eight years, hasn't it, since he's been here? Hughie, he looks forty!"

"Yeah. He took it bad, Ann. Couldn't believe it had happened without anyone even . . . you know."

She nodded. She knew. We all knew.

I went on. "He took off a couple months later. Gone over a year. He looked a lot different when he came back." I caught myself unnecessarily shifting Paulie's position, stopped it. "He didn't joke anymore, or even talk sometimes. Other times he . . . he'd get real mad all of a sudden-like and . . . hurt people. He never did that Before."

Her right forefinger, incredibly soft, rose to my face and fingered my scar — the big one where the jawbone had poked through. Maybe Jack confused her. But was there anything she didn't know about me?

"But you don't hate him for it, do you, Hughie?"

"No."

"You still care about him. You always have."

"Yeah."

"Even after . . ."

"Yeah. Even then."

"Why, Hughie?"

I shrugged, said: "I don't know." And I didn't. Not then.

There was a sudden, bone-jarring crash as the double doors burst open half off of their hinges and there stood Jack, drunk and swaying, between them. And he was covered from head to toe with slag dust.

He looked awful. As he stomped loudly across the room, I saw that his face was a pale grey underneath the grimy coating of slag dust and sweat. His eyes were blood red with what could have been just sadness and fatigue but made me think of panic. When he pounded his fist on the bar for service, he splattered its surface with fat drops of blood. Ann gasped when she saw the nasty gash on his wrist and reached out to cradle his hand.

"My God, Jack! What happened? Your hand . . . your clothes . . ."

He pulled his hand out of her reach with an awkward jerk. He patted his filthy pants with it.

"So what, woman? That's just slag dust. Part of the job I do. Part of my valuable service to God and the Blues. What — are you ashamed of being seen with a slag scraper?"

"No, Jack," she said quietly.

"Good for you. I ain't ashamed either. I love being a scrap iron janitor! Anything to help."

His beer appeared on the bar. He grabbed it, downed it, with one gulp. His elbow shoved against a guy beside him.

Jack spun, growling. His face got taut, his fist shot up . . . He held himself, barely. He didn't kill the guy. Didn't even hit him, somehow. Instead he just leaned against the bar, both hands clamped tightly to the cushion. He looked at his feet, breathing deeply. And trembling.

"Jack," said Ann gently, "let me take you home and get you . . ."

"Hell, no, woman," he said, standing up straight. "I've got business here." He pounded his fist on the bar again.

"Announcement, fellow janitors!" His bellow turned every eye in the room to him. "A toast to our former foreman, Landry. Who gave his life today just for the hell of it. Drink to his memory."

I took a small sip. I don't know how many others drank. Probably everybody. Jack drained half his second beer with one swallow. Then he saw that everybody was watching him.

"So how the hell are you, gentlemen? On this fine Saturday night? Been gone awhile, myself. But everything looks like before. Same pale faces. Same bad beer. Same stupid, worthless arguments too, I bet. Huh, Prof? Anything different this time?"

"Not a thing, Jack," Prof said evenly.

"That figures."

"Glad to have you back, though," Prof continued. "Where've you been?"

"You know goddamned well where I've been, Prof." Jack looked at him then, really looked at someone for the first time. And Prof looked right back. Right into pain. "I've been at the slag burner, Prof," Jack continued hoarsely. "Where the hell else can a man get to be this way? What else but that stinking Blue rat-hole would vomit such filth on a human being?"

Ann tried to grab him again, to stop him. To end the agony of it. But he pushed her away. He stalked over to the biggest empty table in the middle of the room. He grabbed the edge of it with one hand and dragged it over to the bar, scattering chairs and pieces of fractured mugs. He plopped down on it and

stared at Prof from no more than a couple of feet away.

At the far booths, conversations lamely shuffled ahead. Nobody wanted to hear.

"Don't you know why I went back, Prof?" Prof was silent. "Well, don't you? Don't you all?" His voice cracked. He was pleading. Ann turned away.

"Yes, Jack," Prof said at last. "Tell us why."

"For Landry, of course. For his slag pike. He dropped it under the belt, you know, just before it burned him alive."

It got real quiet. Dead still in the whole place. And Jack started to cry.

"I was gonna rip it outta there, Prof. You know? You know, Hughie? Rip it outta there and bust the shit outta everything doing it, too. I was gonna strip those gears, Prof. I was gonna bash the whole assembly, right into the concrete! I . . ."

He broke off suddenly with a sob. He dropped his mug. He covered his face with his hands. His back heaved.

Just when I knew I wasn't going to be able to take it one more second, the whimpering stopped and Jack lifted his head.

He looked worse than ever. Tears poured from his eyes, making tiny pink lines across his blood-smeared cheek. His voice was small for him — too small, dammit.

"I couldn't get it out! I tried! I tried with all I could! All my everything, and I'm strong, Prof . . ."

"I know, Jack," whispered Prof.

Jack lifted one of those huge arms and rested his hand on Prof's shoulder and looked him in the eye and needed — God, how he needed! — an answer.

"Prof, how could he do such a thing? How could we get so excited about it? Prof . . . how? Is throwing it away the only use we got left?"

And then he fell. Tears and muscles and need and pain — all of it slid to the floor. It took forever.

Paulie stirred in my arms. He moaned and stuck his little hands inside my shirt. But he didn't wake up. I took a wet napkin and wiped a drop of blood from his cheek.

PROF STOOD holding Paulie while I helped Ann get his clothes off. Then we both stood and watched while she dabbed away at the grime with a damp rag.

"Goddamned Blues," I muttered, for something to say.

"It's not the Blues," replied Ann calmly, just as if we'd really been talking. "He could take that, I think."

"It's us," said Prof, simply.

"Huh?"

She turned to me. "He loves us so much, Hughie."

"Sure," I said uncertainly. "I know that."

"Not just the three of us. All of us. People, dear, all the . . ."

"Man," said Prof flatly. "He loves Man. We despise ourselves, but he loves us still." He sighed. "It's killing him."

Ann began to weep quietly.

I didn't like any of this. "Aw, he'll be okay, Annie! You'll see." I knelt down and put a clumsy arm around her shoulders. "He'll cheer up," I said.

She turned her face to look at me, those soft eyes peering and pleading like Jack's, and said: "How?"

I TOOK Paulie's fingers out of his mouth and put his arms back under the covers. Then I gave him a pat on the bottom for luck before climbing out onto the fire escape next to Prof. We lit cigarettes and opened beer. It was very late.

Only one person was out, an old man. We watched him hurry down the sidewalk and across the street without looking at anything but a moving spot a couple of steps ahead. He disappeared a few seconds out of the lone streetlight on the next block. And then the streets were completely empty. Dark, quiet, cold.

Maybe he hadn't been all that old after all.

"He'll get better. Won't he, Prof?"

"Jack is dying, Hughie," he replied without looking at me.

"Aw, come on, Prof."

"He's dying. Like all the rest of us. But . . . sooner. And worse, because he sees it happening."

I couldn't stand this anymore. "Look, Prof. Things aren't so great, but . . ."

He cut me off cold. "Why didn't we fight them, Hughie? Why didn't we fight?" He still wasn't looking in my direction.

"Huh? 'Cause it was all over, wasn't it?"

He turned to me at last. "Was it? Or did we just let it go? Oh, God, Hughie! Are we so puny that we'd just let it go?"

I didn't have a damn thing to say to that. I just sat there.

After awhile, he went on:

"We didn't fight. We said it was over and cursed the Bluenoses and blamed it all one them, but . . . we didn't fight!"

"We grovel to them for everything, hating ourselves when we do it — hating others more for doing it better and getting more — and still we grovel. Hate. For the traitors, for the rest of the bluenoses, for ourselves. So much hate, Hughie!"

"But what happened to the hate for the Blues? Where is that?"

"Shit, Prof," I replied, surprised. "Everybody hates 'em."

"Do you, Hughie? Why? Because they won? Because we lost to them?"

"Hell, yes! Both."

"But tell me, Hughie, do you trust them?"

"Do I what?"

"Trust them. Do you believe what they say?"

"I don't know. I guess so. I never heard of them lying to anybody."

"What about us, though? What about a neighbor? Could you trust him not to lie to you? Or worse, to maybe turn you in for extra liquor credits if he caught you . . ."

"Just a damn minute! You . . ."

"It happens, Hughie," he said gently.

I looked at him. I sighed. "I know."

"We all know. We don't trust ourselves anymore, Hughie. We haven't since that day when the Blues took control and we all looked around to see who was fighting back and do you know what we saw? Ourselves. Our own cowardly selves looking back and waiting for someone else to make the first move."

"But dammit, it's the Blues!" I shouted, hating this.

Prof ignored me. "Hughie, haven't you ever wondered why the Games are so popular?"

"What?" I tried to calm myself, still feeling rotten. I thought about his question. "People are bored and . . . I don't know, kinda tense all week and . . ."

"And so they decide to kill one another on Sundays? No, Hughie. Not tense. Furious. Enraged. Hating that neighbor we don't trust."

"That's why we go to the Games. We go to see those bastards suffer for what they did and didn't do and something else: for what we did and didn't do. A little bit of each fan, Hughie, is there to see himself killed."

"But . . . well, Rome had the Games and they weren't . . ."

"Rome was the capital of the world. Her Games, even the minor ones, were the ultimate in spectacle. Ours are nothing more than shoddy little slaughters held in any parking lot or pigpen available. It's not spectacle. It's not sport! It's ... it's self-abuse.

"Goddamn us, Hughie! Why didn't we fight back? Why don't we now?"

I blinked. "Now? We wouldn't have a chance!"

"So what?"

IT CAME on me out of nowhere, halfway through the second year — just when I had thought the worst was past me.

I was still down, of course. Going everyday to a factory run for the Blues by their machines that had always before been run by Man.

By men. By me.

But I did it. Six days a week I did it. I cleaned up after the Blue machines and if I felt we were all like cattle sometimes, I just gritted my teeth and told myself to hang in there, that I would get used to it.

By halfway through the second year, I thought I had. Not happy. But day to day and head down and holding on.

Saturday night. Got Cleaned. Got all my credits. It was a chilly beautiful night and I put on my very best clothes. Went down my sidewalk and into the door of the pharmacy on the corner I had always passed before. Three boxes of sleeping pills — half my credits.

It was windy when I got back outside. I went into the alley to die warm.

Paulie was there. He was wrapped in a brown army blanket and an old shirt. His "bed" was a pile of old magazines wadded up in the center of an old tire. He was about one. He was smiling. A note pinned to the blanket said, "This is my dear little Da . . ." before I stopped reading.

I picked him up and walked away, leaving the pills, the blanket, and the note. It started raining on the way home, so I held him inside my shirt, against my skin, all the way.

I DREAMED MY hand was caught in the Lower Belt. I was going to scream, but I woke up instead. Something still had me by the middle finger of my left hand.

"Company! Company's here!" chirped Paulie.

I opened one eye and sighted down my arm slowly, not wanting to lose my balance, and there stood my bright-eyed, sadistic, child, gleefully yanking my knuckle with both hands.

"Hi, Hughie! Company's here."

I groaned, burped, looked at the clock. 10 a.m. Sundaywise, it was dawn.

Paulie dropped my hand and scooted out of sight, saying: "I'll get 'em," over his shoulder. I started to call to him, but gave it up. I rolled back over instead. I had a special hangover and knew it couldn't happen to me.

Paulie didn't drink. He bounced back into the room dragging Prof by the coat. "It's Prof!" he yelped happily.

I started to growl something but Prof cut me off.

"Sorry to wake you, Hughie. But I wanted to catch you before you went to the Games."

I mumbled something about not going to the Games. He looked surprised. He sat down on the edge of the bed.

"Don't you go to the Games?"

"Not for a coupla years now."

"Really? Hm."

"What did you want?"

"I wanted to say goodbye."

That woke me up. I sat up, stared at him: I reached out blindly for a cigarette. Paulie handed me the pack. I thanked him, patted him on the head, still not taking my eyes off Prof.

He looked different. He looked tired, of course, since he obviously hadn't been to bed yet. But he was holding it well. His eyes were bright and clear. His white hair was combed back over his ears with a flourish. He was excited.

More than that. He was . . . determined.

I knew already, seeing him. But I asked anyway: "Will you be back?"

"No."

I nodded. "We'll miss you."

He smiled at that. "And I'll miss you, too," he said, reaching out and mussing Paulie's hair affectionately.

I sat and smoked while he rough-housed a bit with Paulie. Then he smiled at me again. "Tell everybody," he said.

I nodded again. "You leaving now?"

"This afternoon."

I nodded again. I didn't know what to say. Or, at least, I knew what to say but not how to say it. But I wanted to tell him. I wanted to try.

I tried to speak but there was a lump in my throat and my eyes were getting hot.

"I know," he said suddenly. He patted me on the leg. His eyes were shining too. He stood up. We shook hands. And then he was gone.

"Where's Prof going?" Paulie wanted to know.

"To fight," I replied, which was true. I didn't say "to die," but that was just as true.

"Oh," said Paulie. He didn't understand. But at least he had an answer, which was the main thing. He went off to play.

I tried to go back to sleep. But I kept seeing Prof when he shook my hand. And then I kept seeing him on the fire escape the night before. I could hear Paulie in the next room and the people laughing and stirring in the building and on the street. I wanted to get up and go see Prof and talk to him. But I knew I didn't have anything to say.

I dozed. When I woke up it was almost noon. For some reason, I thought of the Games starting in about an hour. And then for some other reason, or maybe the same one, I had a huge desire to go.

I sat up. I hadn't been to the Games in years. Hadn't wanted to. But, all of a sudden, I couldn't miss it.

The Goldbergs were great people with a little girl who was sweet on Paulie. Paulie would gripe, but I knew he loved spending time playing with her toys and pretending not to be interested. Only the Goldbergs weren't home. Ike Craig offered to take Paulie, but his family was always so sad-looking, even for our sad building. I thought of Ann.

She opened the door looking bright and cheerful. And lovely. She did her bit with Paulie and then sent him off to the kitchen goody-hunting. I asked about Jack.

Her eyes clouded briefly. Then she smiled.

"Mr. Crow was feeling much better this morning, thank you. He was up an hour ahead of me."

She glanced at me, saw my question.

"We didn't discuss last night. Didn't really talk at all before he was dressed

and gone."

"Where'd he go?"

She shrugged delicately. "A mystery. He didn't say. Just kissed me hard and spanked me bye out there on the stoop, right out in front of God and everybody!"

I grinned. "You think he's okay, then?"

She averted her gaze. "I told you how he was."

I couldn't leave it be. "You know what I mean, Ann. Do you think he's going to get over it?"

She looked at me. She was smiling but it was a struggle.

"He hasn't got a prayer," she said calmly and went into the kitchen after Paulie.

I left the two of them together a few minutes later. I didn't mention Prof.

THE ARENA took up an entire city block and held almost ten thousand people. It was one of the biggest in the area, because it was a big city and because we had a pretty good local team. The building held a bus depot Before and still looked like it, I guess. But it always reminded me of one of those old Mexican bullfighting rings. The faded wooden fence that ran all the way around it was covered with posters of local fighters. And the front entrance was made up of four arched tunnels surrounded by fluttering pennants and rows of vendors hawking homemade snacks from homemade carts. The way we were herded in there, with our shabby clothes and the vendors screaming, looked like something that should have taken place a hundred years before with a different people.

I recognized a few of the people around me in the mob. It was a crowd like any sports crowd. But more eager, more anxious. And definitely happier. Everyone around me always seemed to be laughing going into the Games. They were happier than ever today. It was bright and sunshiny, which helped. But more than that, a Blue was there.

I got a good seat. I was about fifteen rows up the first tier and right in the middle so I could see both the Gate and the Bluenose Box with no sweat. It wasn't called the Bluenose Box. It was called the reserved section and supposedly anybody could sit there who was willing to spend the credits. But nobody but a bluenose was rich enough, no matter how willing. Everybody in the bleachers always hated everybody in there.

Especially today, when only the bluest-nosed people in the city were there, showing off their wealth and position and easiness around the Blue. They laughed and chattered and smoked cigars. Their women flashed jewelry and pretty teeth. Not one of them took his eyes off the huge chair in the center of the box or off the giant who so easily filled it. Because nobody, bluenose or otherwise, was really easy around one of Them. About then I realized that it was the same Blue I had seen in his hover the day before. He sat in his chair the same way, too. Huge, serene, uninterested . . . my every fear.

The mayor, sitting beside him (just like Ray had said), stood up and went to the mike. He introduced the Blue and then the Gate opened and the fighters marched out. First came the Hometeam, then the only two independent entrants, then the "guest" entry, the Blueteam. They were really something, those Blueteamers. Only one of the nine was average-sized. The rest of them towered over the other fighters. Everything about them was intimidating, from their highly-polished swords to their deep blue tunics, and I wouldn't have been surprised if the entire local bunch had run away right then. Too bad they didn't.

After the usual ceremony, the mayor announced the opening match: three Hometeamers vs. three Blueteamers. The Blueteamers saluted their boss and waited. The hometeamers took every second allowed checking over each other's weapons and psyching themselves up. By the time the match started, the locals were higher than kites. They all but flew forward.

It was a slaughter. And a quick one. I don't think the Blueteam suffered a scratch among them. The crowd cheered just the same, with individual fans spouting some shit about how you couldn't knock talent like that, no matter what side it was on.

The Blueteamers saluted and disappeared through the Gate. The crew came out to haul off the bodies and spread new sand in the circle. Then the mayor announced the next match: single combat — Blueteamer vs. independent entrant.

The poor local was so scared that his sword shook. He circled the Blueteamer, a big red-headed man twice his size, several times before flinging himself forward, swinging and shouting. He died, beheaded, without striking a single blow.

Still, there was applause.

I understood, then, what Prof had meant. I felt the hate. From the man beside me, from the woman in front of me . . . Hate for the Blueteamers, for the mayor, for the crowd, for ourselves, for being there in the first place. Prof was wrong, too. Because I hated the Blues just as much. This one, anyway, who sat there being bored by dying men.

It only took one man and a handful of sand to clean up. The mayor announced that the next match would be just like the last: single combat — Blueteamer vs. the other independent entrant. The second local man had seen what had happened to the first. He marched to the center of the ring without glancing at his opponent. He took a deep breath, saluted formally, and tried to back down. There was quite a bit of laughter. A couple of people jeered. But no one offered to take his place.

The scum mayor didn't even bother to hide his amusement when he informed the local that, since no one else was willing to fight in his place, the match would continue as announced. The local, a dark, lean kid of about twenty, didn't move. The mayor repeated himself and ordered the kid to fight. The kid still didn't move. The mayor looked nervously at the Blue, who was showing no more interest than before, then ordered the Blueteamer to attack.

"Please," the kid begged, his voice strident with youth and terror. "Please, Sir." He raced across the ring and stood, trembling, right beneath the box.

He was talking to the Blue.

We couldn't hear his voice from there, but we knew what he was doing. He was crying.

The Blue stared blankly down at him for several seconds. Long enough to give the kid some hope. But then he looked away and gestured curtly, casually, for the Blueteamer to get on with it.

"Nooo!" screamed the kid when he heard the footsteps behind him. He staggered to his feet. He threw himself against the wall beneath the box. He sobbed loudly. He stretched his arms over his head, towards the Blue, beseeching pitifully.

The Blue ignored him. He didn't even look down. The Blueteamer started forward again. When he got to within a few steps, the kid screamed and ran. The Blueteamer was right behind him. The kid fled towards the crowd barrier. Just before he got there, he tripped. He was too terrified, I guess, to pull himself back to his feet. Instead, he tried to crawl through the barrier, through the rail-

ing. He got stuck. Or maybe he just froze. But when the Bluteamer stood over him at last, he didn't move. The sword, shining brightly, rose to strike, the crowd tensed forward, the kid screamed in horror . . .

And Jack Crow, seated less than three meters away on the very first row, stood up and said: "Hold it!"

The Bluteamer froze and, like every other living creature in the place, looked at Jack.

"Who the hell are you?" growled the fighter.

Jack stepped up to the barrier and faced him. "Step away from him," he replied calmly. Firmly.

The Bluteamer's eyes flickered toward the box, then back to Jack. "And if I don't?"

Jack's voice was dead flat. "It will hurt," he said.

Jack was bigger. A lot bigger. And he meant it. The two of them stared back and forth from a foot away, the kid lying forgotten between them. And then, with a snarl of raging hatred, the Bluteamer swung out with his sword.

Jack's rocklike fist slammed him right between the eyes with a sound like a big truck hitting a big tree. The Bluteamer was two meters away before he hit the ground. Jack stepped over the barrier and strode towards him. The Bluteamer got halfway to his feet before Jack hit him again. It sounded worse the second time. Jack strode forward again, grabbed hold of an ankle and the collar of the blue tunic, and threw the man against the Gate.

The crowd, stunned before, began to murmur. There was scattered applause. The mayor leapt to his feet and grabbed the mike.

"What do you think you're doing?" he snapped.

Jack turned slowly and faced him across the width of the ring. "That's one," he said bluntly.

The crowd gasped around me. They saw it instantly. The mayor was a little slower.

"What was that?" he demanded.

"That was one," repeated Jack in a cold, clear voice.

The mayor understood it, now. He glared at Jack threateningly. Jack met his gaze calmly. "Very well, whoever you are," said the mayor at last. "Very well." The mayor touched a switch on the console before him. The Gate opened seconds later. Another Bluteamer appeared, looking like he had just thrown his gear together. The fighter paused when he saw his teammate lying still in the sand. He muttered something to someone inside and a couple of the guys from the crew appeared to drag the first man away. Then he turned his attention to Jack.

"You do this?" he asked, gesturing over his shoulder to the busy crewmen.

Jack snorted disgustedly. "You see anybody else?" He walked over and picked up the first man's sword, then stepped to the center of the ring and waited.

The mayor introduced the Bluteamer as Garrison, then asked for Jack's name. Jack gave it to him without comment. Equally casual, the mayor described the circumstances of the match along with Jack's prize, should he win. Then he offered Garrison one hundred credits for a quick victory and sat down.

The people in the crowd looked at one another. Jack's prize was only ten credits. "Typical," muttered somebody beside me who couldn't have known why I stared at him.

The match began. Garrison began immediately to circle Jack, testing his opponent with sharp jabs and twisting feints. Jack, no swordsman, but no idiot either, crouched low, keeping his blade on Garrison all the while.

Seeing Jack's inexperience made Garrison cocky. He began to toy with the end of Jack's sword, not bothering yet to go for the kill. When Jack tried his only clumsy lunge, Garrison laughed and parried at the same time, flipping blade against blade with offhand, insultingly deliberate, expertise. He never saw Jack's left hand coming until it had his sword arm by the wrist. By then it was too late. He was jerked forward helplessly, groin-first, against Jack's upsurging boot. Moaning horribly, sword flying, Garrison catapulted up and back through the air before crashing sideways onto the sand where he lay gasping with his hands between his legs.

Jack picked him up and threw him halfway *through* the Gate with a thunderous din of splintering plywood slats.

"That's two," he said simply.

The crowd exploded into wild cheering and deafening applause that went on a long time. "Just one more to go!" I heard several people shout. Then they would point to the mayor and drag their fingers happily across their throats. There was no doubt in their minds as to who Jack would pick to fight if he could beat the third and last man. They could already picture the most hated of all bluenoses crawling.

I guess the mayor could see it, too. He spent a long time on the phone to somebody behind the Gate. He looked like he was furious with whomever he was talking to. Mostly, though, he looked scared. He wouldn't look at Jack, who stood staring at him from the center of the ring.

The mayor's long consultation was worth it. They guy who finally came out was a for-real giant. He was huge, bald, and carrying the biggest sword I had ever seen.

The crowd got quiet in a hurry, seeing in a second that the last Bluteamer was a good three inches taller than Jack, and maybe thirty pounds heavier. This was going to be a lot different.

It was. Jack almost died in the first five minutes. The giant had beaten him back so quickly that he lost his balance and fell against the barrier. Jack must have banged his head against one of the bars or something, because he just sat there for a second without moving. Then he shook his head and looked up in time to see all his enemies smiling.

All his enemies. Not just the bald giant, rushing forward to kill him. And not just the mayor, leaning forward with eager beady eyes. The Blue was smiling, too. I don't know if anybody else even noticed. But I saw it and Jack sure as Hell did, I know. It was a vicious, cunning smile. A slight curl of a great blue mouth on a great blue face. It was unforgettable. It scared me.

It made Jack mad. He was something horrible when he got back to his feet. He wailed away at the giant with wild swooping swings that ended in ear splitting clangs and bursts of sparks. The giant was off-balance for good after the first collision. Jack's blows were just too powerful and they came too fast for the giant to have a chance to do anything but block them. Jack could have gotten him in the first ten seconds if he hadn't kept doing the same thing over and over. He didn't try to change his tactics, though. He just pounded away at the giant's head, blow after blow. Maybe Jack didn't know what else to do.

Or maybe he just didn't care about doing anything else but smashing that bald head. Maybe killing the guy wasn't enough. Maybe he had to crush him.

He did just that. He backed him against the wall beside the Gate. He battered him to his knees, then kept on and on until he had broken the giant's guard, then his sword, then his arm. Jack didn't stop, didn't even slow down, until that huge bald head was a fractured, splintered mess. It was a bad thing to see.

Too bad, in fact, for the crowd. They were too stunned to cheer. They just

stared.

Jack snapped out of it a few seconds later. He dropped his sword on the body and whirled to face the box. Then he stalked across the sand to a spot just below the mayor and stood there, hands on hips, smiling a coal-black smile.

"I'll give you five hundred credits to pick somebody else," said the mayor in a nervous, trembling voice.

That woke the crowd up. They laughed.

"A thousand," upped the mayor when Jack didn't react. The crowd laughed some more at that and even more when the bid went to two thousand. Then five thousand. Then eight thousand, five hundred.

"It's all I have," implored the mayor and the laughter peaked.

Jack laughed too, at that. He laughed as he held out his hand and laughed as the money was counted out and laughed as he tucked it away in his belt and walked off. He stopped laughing abruptly, when he looked at us. He stopped our laughter too, with a blazing glare of withering disgust.

Looking and feeling like scolded children, we settled down at once. And waited, while he stood at the barrier and scanned back and forth across our faces. It was no better when he finished his examination and laughed again. It wasn't a pleasant sound.

"So who is it, you want to know! Huh? Who's next, right? Whom do I chose now?"

We cringed under his incredibly brutal, angry tone.

"Who, indeed?" he said and spat into the sand between his feet. When he lifted his head back up, his face was red with blind, uncontrollable rage. "Who??? I'll tell you who!!!" he shrieked. He spun around back toward the box and pointed a shaking finger dead center at it and shouted:

"You!!! You, you Blue motherfucker! You! Get your blue ass down here and fight!"

No one spoke. No one moved. No one breathed. For what seemed like a long time, the Blue just sat there, coldly eyeing Jack. Then he stood up, all eight and a half feet of him, and vaulted over the box wall onto the sand.

And, without hesitation, it began.

Something big happened, then. Something more important than anything else.

It started when Jack pointed at the Blue. It faded a little when we saw that the Blue was really going to fight.

But it shot back up when, after a blue-fisted blow that would have killed a steer, Jack got back up.

Still, no one spoke. Not then. Not yet. But we moved with his every move. Jack's fists were mirrored thousands of times by our own, as they struck the enemy time and time again. We all ducked beneath that tremendous, hurtling, forearm. And we all gasped when it made its shuddering impact. But only Jack felt the awesome concussion. Only Jack felt the pain. Only Jack fell sprawling onto the sands.

And, bleeding visibly, got up a second time.

So astonished by this was the Blue, that he was left completely unprepared for attack. Jack's thundering roundhouse right actually knocked the enemy back.

Our cheering, our screaming, our hoping — they all started at that instant. And through it all, our love for Jack, our heartbreaking affection for him, never dimmed.

It took the Blue almost half an hour to kill Jack. Even as bad as he looked then — covered with blood and bruises, his shattered collarbone jutting horribly —

we thought he might still get up. And for a full minute, we waited, unmoving, for that very thing to happen. The Blue waited with us.

But Jack never moved again.

So then we knew. It was over. What had to be, was. The Blue had won like we all knew he had to and Jack was dead and, okay, okay, we're impressed and leaving quietly. We made ready to go. The Blue was going to leave, too. But before he did, he gave Jack's body one last, contemptuous, kick.

We rose. We were screaming. We were surging forward. The barrier collapsed beneath our mass. For several moments all became blurred until . . .

We were cheering again and dancing in the sand. Some of us hugged one another. Others held pieces of the Blue high over their heads and laughed.

Nothing else in my life could match it. Nothing could even come close. Not Jack, not Ann. Not even Paulie.

We were all so goddamned proud to learn that even we, cowards and blue-noses all, had a limit.

Soon, too soon, the jubilation ended and the fear returned. People began leaving quickly. I found Jack's body beside the barrier right where the kid had lain in panic. What had happened to *him*? Or did it really matter?

I looked at his face, holding it between my hands for several moments. Then I released him and kissed his bloody forehead. I found the fortune still folded inside his belt. I kissed him again.

For once, I knew just what to do. I headed home.

Ann took one look at me and gasped. I didn't move, didn't speak, while she searched my eyes.

"Jack?" she asked at last.

"He was great," I replied.

Prof was just leaving when the three of us arrived at his place. I had thought I might have to persuade him to let us come along, or at least tell him what happened. But one look at my excited face was all he needed. He clamped a hand on my shoulder, kissed Ann, and offered to carry Paulie the first hundred miles.

WE ARE never completely safe. Not even here. For the jungle can both kill and feed. Though it hides us, it also swallows us. And always the Blues, circling above. They caught us last night when we crossed the *Negro*. Many were burned. Paul says it was over two thousand people, children and old-ones mostly. If he is right, and he usually is, then I was very lucky indeed. Still, that is a great many friends to lose.

Some went back today, more than on other days. They cannot live without a permanent home, even if it isn't theirs. They cannot live without a regular supply of food, even if they are just being fed. They cannot live without safety, even if it is prison.

They cannot raise their families, they tell me, while hiding in the jungle. They tell me that I don't understand that some people must have security. But I do understand it.

Some people must have the Blues.

But few have fallen so far. Most of us stay, for though we are tired and hunted and very often frightened, we are free.

And we are growing. ●

John Steakley

1951 - Cleburne, Texas, a Leo starts

1961 - Major Event - first erection

1962 - Major Events -

(a) Moved to Dallas, the big city

(b) Read first book - "Red Planet", by Robert A. Heinlein

1963 - Major Event - second erection

1969 - Major Event - College Education discarded in favor of adventure and romance as bandit in Bolivian Highlands.

High Crusade forcibly aborted when first partner, then money, then nerve, drop behind. Education resumed with loss of less than two weeks for the entire round trip to Guatemala and back.

1970 - Major Event - \$150 earned selling term papers to fellow students demonstrates not only existence, but true significance of new-found literary aptitude

1972 - Major Event - Movie treatment, "Vampires For Blood and money" sold for \$800

Career Goal #5 - Oscar for best Screenplay by 25

1973 - Major Event - Graduation from Southern Methodist University with a full half credit hour to spare. Temporary financial necessity of entrance into mundane world of commerce is made bearable by the surprise discovery of a genuine aptitude for the position of Owner's Son.

1975 - Major Event - Move to Hoorayfor-

Hollywood, California. The combined assets of youth, courage, talent, and a small family loan, are brought to bear against the very core of the Movieland Rat Race with the sort of fierce determination that can only mean one thing: Superstar

1977 - Major Event - Back to Dallas

Career Goal #6 - The Ability, by 1980, to look back and laugh at recent events

1979 - Career Goal #7 - Science Fictioneer

Major Events

(a) SF Short Story #1 is rejected. All 12 copies are returned within a week. Five copies are back within three days. One is only gone an hour.

(b) SF Short Story #2 is rejected. In an attempt to better focus on the market, only seven copies are sent out. Eight are returned.

(c) SF Short Story #3 is "The Bluenose Limit". It is so clearly a masterpiece that the editors of "Amazing" require a scant seven months to decide to buy.

See what happens if you just hang in there?—Ed



the Amazing Hall of Fame

presents:

Jack Williamson's

The Cold Green Eye

Amazing Stories has been around since 1926. That's a lot of years . . . years during which hundreds of stories penned by writers unknown then and hailed today expanded the imaginative horizons of that special breed of bookworm, the science fiction fan. Issues from the first several decades represent a treasure trove of early Silverberg, Ellison, Benford, Sheckley, Heinlein, Bradbury, Malzberg, Simak, Williamson, Bloch, Gunn . . . to name just a few. To leave such a wealth of material buried in the background seems uncon-

scionable, so we have been contacting these authors and asking them to reintroduce their stories from the pages of *Amazing/Fantastic* past for the readers of *Amazing/Fantastic* today. Also, for writers of *Amazing/Fantastic* today, who now have the same opportunity as Hall of Famers, herewith a hoard of nostalgic inspiration. Our second presentation in this series is from master story teller, Jack Williamson who reintroduces "The Cold Green Eye".



Illustrated by Steve Fabian

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Foreword

Amazing Stories changed my life. That statement may seem strange in these days of STAR TREK and STAR WARS, when science fiction is a popular literary genre, taught in universities and read around the world. But things were different back in 1926, when Hugo Gernsback began *Amazing*.

The term "science fiction" hadn't yet been invented. He coined that in 1929 for *Science Wonder Stories*. *Amazing* published "scientifiction," and it was the only magazine devoted to that. Most people had never heard of it.

Certainly, in 1926, things were different for me. I had turned eighteen that year, just out of a country high school that no longer exists, with no very rosy future visible. I had grown up on the family farm and ranch in Eastern New Mexico, where survival wasn't easy. Fascinated with the bits of science I had gleaned out of old textbooks and encyclopedias, I thought I wanted to be some sort of scientist, with no means in sight to make that happen.

I had been equally fascinated with the few works of scientific imagination I had blundered across, such as the tales of Edgar Allan Poe and Mark Twain's *Connecticut Yankee*, but I had yet to discover the wonders of Verne and Wells and Merritt and Burroughs.

Amazing changed everything. It carried me away from the arid sandhills and the endless days of watching the rear ends of mules pulling plows and dogie yearlings on the trail, lifting me into the dazzle of the possible future and the magic of travel in space and time and new dimensions.

I began writing my own — I had dreamed of being an author since I was told, back before I ever learned to read, that Twain was paid a dollar a word, even for easy ones like "the." A few stories came back with rejection slips. One, I later discovered, had a word spelled wrong in the title.

But then there was "The Metal Man." I sent it to Gernsback in the summer of 1928. It didn't come back. That fall, my father found funds to help me start college at Canyon, Texas. Walking by a newsstand there one November day, I passed a newsstand and recognized my metal man on the cover of the December *Amazing*.

Suddenly, amazingly, I really was a writer!

I'll never forget that *Amazing* printed my

first story — and, that January, paid me twenty-five dollars for it. I've followed the varied formats and fortunes of the magazine over all the years since then. Its newest revival has restored a lot of the excitement that captured me so long ago, and I hope it survives to enjoy at least another great half-century.

Looking back over my own contributions, I find that most of them were novellettes or serials, too long for this department. They include my first novels, *The Green Girl*, *The Stone from the Green Star*, and *The Birth of a New Republic*, the latter with Miles J. Breuer. (Pat Adkin in New Orleans has begun reprinting these in a facsimile collector's edition, through his P.A.D. Enterprises.)

The best available story seems to be "The Cold Green Eye." It was written late in 1945 in a replacement depot — we called it a "Repple Depple" — near Manila. Before Hiroshima, I had been an Army Air Forces meteorologist, forecasting weather for a Marine air group operating against the bypassed Japanese on Bougainville and at Rabaul. The Army had been a generally good experience, but I was anxious to get back to science fiction. Instead of going on to Japan with the occupation forces, I was waiting for a troop ship home.

I was living in a twenty-man tent with other returning men, most of them supply personnel boasting about their exploits on the black market. After a few days of wandering about the war-battered city and a visit to the rather awesome ruins of the bomb-shattered fortress on Cavite, I started writing a short story a day.

These were brief ironic tales, most of which I later discarded. One, "The Rajah McCarty and the Jungle Tomato," was a satire based on the black-marketeers around me. I still think it was pretty good, but I never found an editor who agreed.

"The Cold Green Eye" was the only one ever published. Howard Browne bought it, made some useful suggestions about the character of Aunt Agatha Grimm, and ran it in the issue of *Fantastic* for March-April, 1953. Actually, for the nature of Aunt Agatha, I owe a good deal more to certain other people I encountered and resented long ago. The story tells more than I really know about the holy Jains and the doctrine of reincarnation, but I have always liked it, and I'm happy to see it honored in "The Amazing Hall of Fame."

— Jack Williamson

KANSAS?" THE BOY looked hard at his teacher. "Where is Kansas?" "I do not know." The withered old monk shrugged vaguely. "The spring caravan will carry you down out of our mountains. A foreign machine called a railway train will take you to a city named Calcutta. The lawyers there will arrange for your journey to Kansas."

"But I love our valley." Tommy glanced out at the bamboo plumes nodding above the old stone walls of the monastery garden and the snowy Himalaya towering beyond. He turned quickly back to catch the holy man's leathery hand. "Why must I be sent away?"

"A matter of money and the law."

"I don't understand the law," Tommy said. "Please can't I stay? That's all I want — to be here with the monks of Mahavira, and play with the village children, and study my lessons with you."

"We used to hope that you might remain with us to become another holy man." Old Chandra Sha smiled wistfully behind the cloth that covered his mouth to protect the life of the air from injury by his breath. "We have written letters about your unusual aptitudes, but the lawyers in Calcutta show little regard for the ancient arts and those in Kansas none at all. You are to go."

"I don't need money," Tommy protested. "My friends in the village will give me rice, and I can sleep in the courtyard here —"

"I think there is too much money, burdening souls with evil karma," the lean old man broke in softly. "Your father was a famous traveler, who gathered dangerous riches. Since the wheel has turned for him, others desire his fortune. I think perhaps that is why the lawyers sent for you."

A fly came buzzing around his dried-up face, and he paused to wave it very gently away.

"Your mother's sister lives in that place named Kansas," he went on. "It is arranged for you to go to her. She is your own race and blood, and she wants you in her home —"

"No! She never even saw me," Tommy whispered bitterly. "She couldn't really want me. Must I go?"

"It is to be." Chandra Sha nodded firmly. "Your people are ignorant about the true principles of matter and the soul, but their own peculiar laws require obedience. The caravan leaves tomorrow."

Tommy wanted not to weep, but he was only ten. He clung sobbing to the thin old Jain.

"We have instructed you well," the holy man murmured, trying to comfort him. "Your feet are already on the pathway to nirvana, and I will give you a copy of the secret book of Rishabha to guide and guard you on your way."

Tommy went down out of the mountains with the caravan. He was bewildered and afraid, and the motion of the railway cars made him ill, but the lawyers in Calcutta were kind enough. They bought him new garments, and took him to a cinema, and put him on a great strange machine called an airplane. At last he came to Kansas and his Aunt Agatha Grimm.

He rode from the depot to her home in a jolting farm truck, peering out at the strange sun-flooded flatness of the land and a monstrous orange-painted machine called a combine that grazed like the golden bull of Rishabha through the ripe wheat.

The hired man stopped the truck beside a huge wooden house that stood like a fort in the middle of the endless land, and Tommy's aunt came out to greet him with a moist kiss. A plump, pink-skinned blonde, with a sweet, smooth,

sweat-beaded face. He was used to darker women, and she seemed incredibly fair.

"So you're Lizzie's boy?" She and her sister had come from Alabama, and soft Negro accents still echoed in her voice. "Gracious, honey, what's the matter?"

Tommy had run to meet her eagerly, but he couldn't help shrinking back when he saw her eyes. The left was warm and brown and kind as old Chandra Sha's. But the right eye was different, a frosty, greenish blue; it seemed to look straight through him.

"Well, child, can't you talk?"

He gulped and squirmed, trying to think of words to say in English. But he couldn't think at all. Somehow, the blue eye froze him.

"Nothing," he muttered at last. "Just — nothing."

"Lizzie's boy would be a little odd." She smiled, too sweetly. "Brought up by jabbering heathens! But this is going to be your home, you know. Come on inside. Let me clean you up."

The hired man brought the carved teakwood chest the monks had given him, and they went into the big house. The smell of it was strange and stale. The windows were closed, with blinds drawn down. Tommy stood blinking at the queer heavy furniture and dusty bric-a-brac crammed into the dim cave of the living room, until he heard a fly buzzing at the screen door behind him. He turned without thinking to help it escape.

"Wait, honey." His aunt caught his arm, to seat him firmly on the teakwood chest. "I'll kill it!"

She snatched a swatter from the high oak mantel and stalked the fly through the gloomy jungle of antimacassared chairs and fussy little tables to a darkened window. The swatter fell with a vicious *thwack*.

"Got him!" she said. "I won't endure flies."

"But, Aunt Agatha!" The English words were coming back, although his thoughts were still in the easy vernacular the monks had taught him. His shy, hesitant voice was shocked. "They, too, are alive."

The brown eye, as well as the blue, peered sharply at him. His aunt sat down suddenly, gasping as if she needed fresh air. He wanted to open the windows, but he was afraid to move.

"Thomas, honey, you're upsetting me terribly." Her pale fat hands fluttered nervously. "I guess you didn't know that I'm not well at all. Of course I love children as much as anybody, but I really don't know if I can endure you in the house. I always said myself that you'd be better off in some nice orphanage."

Or back with the monks, Tommy told himself unhappily. He couldn't help thinking that she looked as tough and strong as a mountain pony, but he decided not to say so.

"But sick as I am, I'll take you in." Her moist, swollen lips tried to smile. "Because you're Lizzie's boy. It's my duty, and the legal papers are all signed. The judge gave me full control of you, and your estate, till you come of age. Just keep that in mind."

Nodding miserably, Tommy huddled smaller on the chest.

"I'm giving you a decent home, so you ought to be grateful." A faint indignation began to edge her voice. "I never approved when Lizzie ran away to marry a good-for-nothing explorer — not even if his long-winded books did make them rich. Served her right when they got killed, trying to climb them foreign mountains. I guess she never had a thought of me — her wandering like a gypsy queen through all them wicked heathen countries, never sending me a penny. A lot she cared if her own born sister had to drudge away like a common hired

girl!"

Sudden tears shone in the one brown eye, but the other remained dry and hard as glass.

"What I can't forgive is all she did to you." Aunt Agatha snuffled and dabbled at her fat, pink nose. "Carrying you to all those outlandish foreign places. Letting you associate with all sorts of nasty natives. The lawyers said you've had no decent religious training. I guess you've picked up goodness knows what superstitious nothings. But I'll see you get a proper education."

"Thank you very much!" Tommy sat up hopefully. "I want to learn. Chandra Sha was teaching me Sanskrit and Arabic. I can speak Swahili and Urdu, and I'm studying the secret book of Rishabha —"

"Heathen idolatry!" The blue eye and the brown widened alarm. "Wicked nonsense you'll soon forget, here in Kansas. Simple reading and writing and arithmetic will do for the like of you, and a Christian Sunday school."

"But Rishabha was the first Thirtankara," Tommy protested timidly. "The greatest of the saints. The first to find nirvana."

"You little infidel!" Aunt Agatha's round pink face turned red. "But you won't find — whatever you call it. Not here in Kansas! Now bring your things up to your room."

Staggering with the teakwood chest, he followed her up to a narrow attic room. Hot as an oven, it had a choking antiseptic smell. The dismal, purple-flowered wallpaper was faded and water stained. At the tiny window, a discouraged fly hummed feebly.

Aunt Agatha went after it.

"Don't!" Tommy dropped the chest and caught at her swatter. "Please, may I just open the window and let it go?"

"Gracious child! What on earth?"

"Don't you know about flies?" A sudden determination steadied his shy voice. "They, too, have souls. And it is wrong to kill them."

"Honey child, are you insane?"

"All life is akin, through the Cycle of Birth," he told her desperately. "The holy Jains taught me that. As the wheel of life turns, our souls go from one form to another — until each is purged of every karma, so that it can rise to nirvana."

She stood motionless, with the swatter lifted, frozen with astonishment.

"When you kill a fly," he said, "you are loading your own soul with bad karma. Besides, you may be injuring a friend."

"Well, I never!" The swatter fell out of her shocked hand. Tommy picked it up and gave it back to her, politely. "Such wicked heathen foolery! We'll pray, to-night, to help you find the truth."

Tommy shuddered, as she crushed the weary fly.

"Now, unpack your box," she commanded. "I'll have no filthy idols here."

"Please," he protested unhappily. "These things are my own."

The blue eye was relentless, but the brown one began to cry. Tears ran down her smooth face, and her heavy bosom quaked.

"Tommy! How can you be so mulish? When I'm only trying to take your poor dead mother's place, and me such an invalid."

"I'm sorry," he told her. "I hope your health improves. I'll show you everything."

The worn key hung on a string around his neck. He unlocked the chest, but she found no idols. His clothing she took to be laundered, lifting each piece gingerly with two fingers as if it had been steeped in corruption. She sniffed at a fragrant packet of dried herbs, and seized it to be burned.

Finally she bent to peer at the remaining odds and ends — the brushes and

paints his mother had given him when she left him with the monks, a few splotched watercolors he had tried to make of the monastery and the mountains and his village friends, the broken watch the mountaineers had found beside his father's body, a thick painted cylinder.

"That?" She pointed at his picture of a shy brown child. "Who's that nigger girl?"

"Mira Bai was not a Negro." He covered the picture quickly with another, to hide it from that cold blue eye. "She lived in my own village. She was my teacher's niece. We used to study together. But her legs were withered and she was never strong. Last year before the rains were ended the wheel turned for her."

"What wheel?" Aunt Agatha sniffed. "Do you mean she's dead?"

"The soul never dies," Tommy answered firmly. "It always returns in a new body, until it escapes to nirvana. Mira Bai has a stronger body now, because she was good. I don't know where she is — maybe here in Kansas! Someday I'll find her, with the science of Rishabha."

"You poor little fool!" Aunt Agatha stirred his small treasures with the swat-ter handle, and jabbed at the painted cylinder. "Now what's that contraption?"

"Just — a book."

Very carefully, he slipped it out of the round wooden case and unrolled a little of the long parchment strip. It was very old, yellowed and cracked and faded. The mild brown eye squinted in a puzzled way at the dim strange characters. He wondered how much the blue one saw.

"That filthy scribbling? That's no book."

"It is older than printing," he told her. "It is written with the secret wisdom of the Thirtankara Rishabha. It tells how souls may be guarded through their transmigrations and helped upward toward nirvana."

"Heathen lies!" She reached for it angrily. "I ought to burn it."

"No!" He hugged it in his skinny arms. "Please don't! Because it is so powerful. I need it to aid my father and mother in their new lives. I need it to know Mira Bai when I find her again. I think you need it too, Aunt Agatha, to purge your own soul of the eight kinds of karma —"

"What?" The brown eye widened with shock and the blue one narrowed angrily. "I'll have you know that I'm a decent Christian, safe in the heart of God. Now put the filthy scrawl away and wash yourself up. I guess *that's* something your verminous monks forgot to teach you."

"Please! The holy men are very clean."

"Now you're trying to aggravate me, poorly as I am." She snuffled and her brown eye wept again. "I'm going to teach you a respectable religion, and I don't need any nasty foreign scribbles to help me whip the sin out of you!"

She was very sweet about it, and she always cried when she was forced to beat him. The exertion was really too much for her poor heart. She did it only for dear Lizzie's sake, and he ought to realize that the punishment was far more painful to her than to him.

She tried to teach him her religion, but Tommy clung to the wisdom of the kind old monks of Mahavira. She tried to wash the East out of him with pounds of harsh yellow soap, until his sunburnt skin had faded to a sickly yellow pallor. She prayed and cried over him for endless hours, while he knelt with numb bare knees on cruel bare floors. She threatened to whip him again, and she did.

She whipped him when he covered up the big sheets of sticky yellow fly paper she put in his room, whipped him when he poured out the shallow dishes of fly poison she kept on the landing. But she seemed too much shaken to strike him, on the sultry afternoon when she found him carefully liberating the flies in the screen wire trap outside the kitchen door — a Kansas summer breeds flies

enough.

"You sinful little infidel!"

Her nerves were all on edge. She had to sit down on the doorstep, resting her poor heart and gasping with her asthma. But her fat pink fingers seemed strong enough, when she caught him by the ear.

She called the hired man to bring a torch dipped in gasoline, and held him so that he had to watch while she burned the flies that were left in the trap. He stood shivering with his own pain, quiet and pale and ill.

"Now come along!" She led him up the stairs, by his twisted ear. "I'll teach you whether flies have souls." Her voice was like a saw when it strikes a nail. "I'm going to lock you up tonight without your supper, but I'll see you in the morning."

She shoved him into the stifling attic room. It was bare and narrow as the monastery cells, with only his hard little cot and his precious teakwood chest. His tears blurred the painted carving on the chest — it was the blue snake of the deva Parshva, who had reached nirvana.

She held him by the twisted ear.

"Believe me, Thomas, this hurts me terribly." She snuffled and cleared her throat. "I want you to pray tonight. Beg God to clean up your dirty little soul."

She gave his ear another twist.

"When I come back in the morning, I want you to get down on your bended knees with me and confess to Him that all this rot about flies with souls is only a wicked lie."

"But it's the truth!" He caught his breath, trying not to whimper. "Please, Aunt Agatha, let me read you part of the sacred book —"

"Sacred?" She shook him by the ear. "You filthy little blasphemer! I'm going down now to pray for you. But when I come back in the morning I'm going to open up your box and take away that heathen writing — I declare it's what gives you all these wicked notions. I'm going to burn it in the kitchen stove."

"But — Aunt Agatha!" He shivered with a sharper pain. "Without the secret book, I can't guide anybody toward nirvana. I can't help my father and mother, struggling under their load of karma. I won't even know little Mira Bai, if I should ever find her."

"I'll teach you what you need to know." She let go his tingling ear, to box it sharply. "We'll burn that book in the morning. You'll forget every word it says, or stay in this room till you starve."

She locked the door on him and waddled down the stairs again, weeping for his soul and wheezing with her asthma. She had a good nip of whiskey for her heart, and filled herself a nice plate of cold roast chicken and potato salad before she went up to her own room to pray.

For a long time Tommy sat alone on the edge of the hard lumpy cot with his throbbing head in his hands. Crying was no use; old Chandra Sha had taught him that. He longed for his father and mother, those tanned happy wanderers he could barely remember, but the wheel had turned for them.

Nothing was left, except the sacred parchment. When the ringing in his punished ear had stopped, he bent to unlock the teakwood chest. He unrolled the brittle yellow scroll. His pale lips moved silently, following the faded black-and-scarlet characters.

The book, he felt, was more precious than all Kansas. He had to save it, to help his reborn parents, and to find Mira Bai, and even to aid his aunt — her poor soul was laden, surely, with a perilous burden of karma, but perhaps the science of the book could find her a more fortunate rebirth.

Trembling and afraid, he began to do what the holy men had taught him. It was the hired girl, next morning, who came up to unlock his room. She was looking for his Aunt Agatha.

"I can't understand it." Her twangy Kansas voice was half hysterical. "I didn't hear a thing, all night long. The outside doors are locked up tight. None of her things are missing. But I've looked high and low. Your sweet little Auntie isn't anywhere."

The boy looked thin and pale and drawn. His dark eyes were rimmed with grime, hollowed for want of sleep. He was rolling up the long strip of brittle yellow parchment. Very carefully, he replaced it in the painted case.

"I think you wouldn't know her now." His shy voice was sad. "Because the wheel of her life has turned again. She has entered another cycle."

"I don't know what you mean." The startled girl stared at him. "But I'm afraid something awful has happened to your poor old Auntie. I'm going to phone the sheriff."

Tommy was downstairs in the gloomy front room when the sheriff came, standing in a chair drawn up against the mantel.

"Now don't you worry, little man," the sheriff boomed. "I'm come out to locate old Miz Grimm. Just tell me when you seen her last."

"Here she is, right now," Tommy whispered faintly. "But if you haven't been instructed in the science of transmigration, I don't think you'll know her."

He was leaning over one of the big yellow sheets of adhesive fly paper that Aunt Agatha liked to leave spread at night to catch flies while she slept. He was trying to help a large, blue fly that was hopelessly tangled and droning in its last feeble fury.

"Pore little young-un!" The sheriff clucked sympathetically. "His aunt told me he was full of funny heathen notions!"

He didn't even glance at the dying fly. But Tommy hadn't found it hard to recognize. Its right eye was a furious greenish blue, the left was a tiny bead of wet brown glass. ●

Jack Williamson

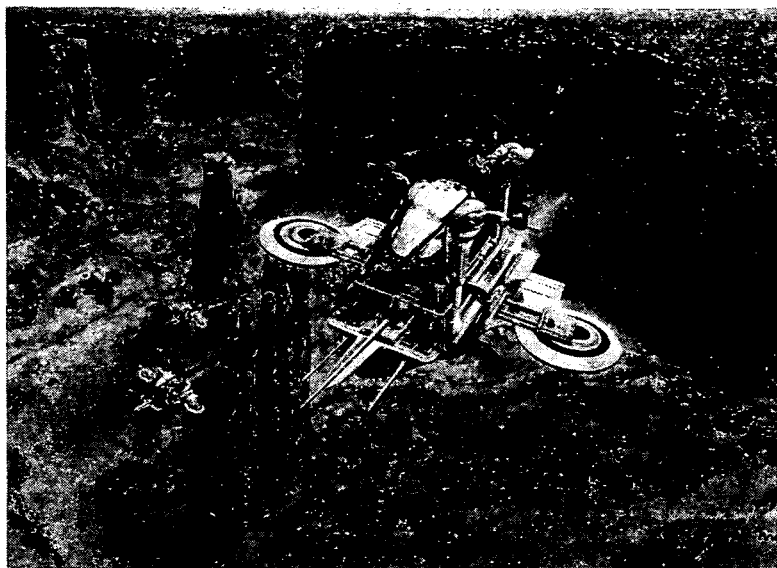
A writer who has successfully spanned all phases of sf from space opera to present day in high style, Jack Williamson is certainly one of the masters of this field of literature. Surely ranking at the top of the list of rousing space operas is his *Legion of Space* series including "The Legion of Space", "The Cometeers" and "One Against the Legion". And as reported last summer, he is hard at work on a new novel in the series.

Others among the most popular novels by this prolific writer include "Darker

Than You Think", "Seetee Ship" and "Seetee Shock" (written under the pseudonym Will Stewart), "The Humanoids" (ultimate robots who don't know when to stop a good thing) and the "Starchild" trilogy (written with Frederik Pohl, examining mankind in a galaxy-wide civilization).

We are glad Jack Williamson got his start on the pages of *Amazing* and proud to honor him in the Hall of Fame.—Editor

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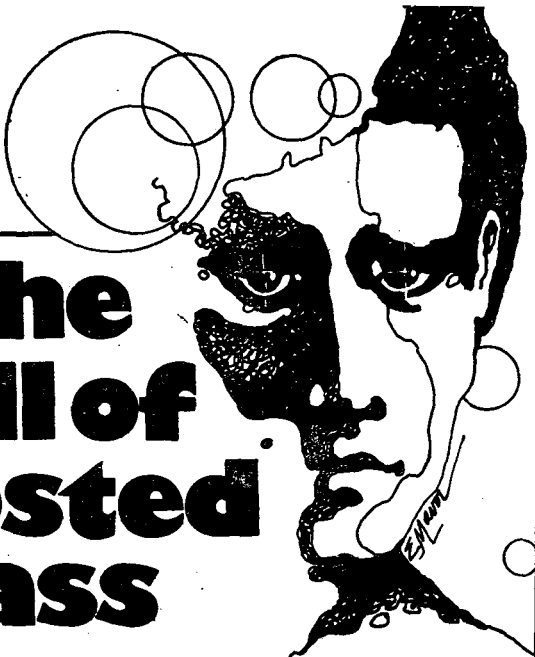
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**DAVID R.
BUNCH**

in the Ball of Frosted Glass

(WITH A BIG PINK-LAVENDER LOAD)



I HAD JUST reached the stage of the "all right" place down at Bavert's *Top o' the Hill*, so I looked the dwarfish bartender hard in the vicinity of his bearded, angular face and told him straight, "No more for me of your rot-gut stuff. What we're doing's not doing it. I'm leaving." What I did then I probably couldn't have done better with wings from the True Lord. I lifted out of that cheap dive, out of that dump town where where I'd waited month to month for payments on the war leg I had sick from those old landings (contested, bad-welcome, no-flowers-for coming!) — went past all the nylongarbadine peopled streets where I'd slipped bar to bar while the years died — fled like a phantom with the battle jacket, good finally for no more than the price of a citizen's frown, ragged on me — I just left. And I did not flaunt the wound-lurch or go the memento-gimp as I "flew" myself out on wings I had made at Bavert's *Top o' the Hill*. (For all that I now knew, I was mended — whole as the day I was born!)

I "landed" at the first place that seemed all pink lights, one that was a giant ball of frosted glass set down on two great green legs that could pass for jade! almost. Across a high big window a quavering neon sign said **VARIETIES** in a soft blue-velvet hue, and the door that opened for me at the top of some tall bird-hopping of stairs was, I thought, like a swinging in of a piece of summer moonlight. When I was inside, a little man clad in a sequined pink jacket (with music notations all over it) and pink trousers (with bars of the tunes going all up and down the legs) raced toward me. He could not, it seemed, quite cloak his surprise at something that completely baffled his mind, and when he had reached me, his small, pink hands began to clutch the air by square handfuls.

Except that I was "feeling good," "just right" for the occasion, I would have at once seen through it all and perceived that he wanted me to depart, and that the air clutching and arm posturing were fist hints. So, "feeling good," I stayed, flapped my wings to straighten the feathers a bit, caught his smile, and if his smile were fiendish, and devious, and plotting — well, it may have been all these, and untoward. But soon he'd made a brave show of letting me feel that I was not out of place, and then he excused himself, explaining, "Since you're here, and you're staying, I'd better go wake up the acts." Strange music started up; I thought of the music notes on his trouser legs and jacket as I watched him hop up some tall steps and disappear.

Left alone, I looked intently about me in the pink glow, and it was full moments before I guessed, and correctly, that the tables and chairs were all rosy glass, making them hard for me to see. I groped forward then, folded my wings for perching, sat at the nearest table I could guess and a man soon came toward me. He was small and baldish and he too had a short, black beard hanging from an angular face, very much like the little man who had but a moment ago hopped away and up the stairs! He was dressed to fit into the pink atmosphere in such a clever manner that it was hard to judge the rate at which he moved. And that ambiguity in motion was partly because his movements were playing the notes on his trouser legs, I thought it must be! and some of his jacket bars too. YES! And thinking on the far good things, like music and mysteries! I was a bit startled when a dark beard tipped toward me out of the dreamy, nearly incomprehensible, pink haze and said in a very everyday tone, "Oh, we've been expecting YOU, sir, and this is YOUR table, Mr. _____" He called my name and stood up straight, smiled a practiced, waiting smile that looked different done in pink and said "Which one do you wish, sir, to start the night with tonight, sir?"

I shot my wings out at him for a little flutter of pure time there in the soft and very beautiful rosy air and was surprised to hear myself saying, "Only one will I talk with tonight, sir — solely, only Lucinda!" Indeed, I knew no Lucinda, though in my "all-rightness" and my ease I liked the sound of that voluptuous, oh enchanting! name and had heard that it meant "bringer of light." Suddenly I wished to "do things" only with a woman who had a name of that dear meaning and that soft sound. It could mean so much so many ways, and I CERTAINLY hoped that it would.

"Lucinda it will be!" he sang out, and I began to wonder if she would be dressed in pink, and I made a wish that she not be, because I wanted to be able to see her in the clear. Oh, I wanted so very much to be able to see her in the clear light. But yes! she came, barely discernible, in an exquisite, filmy, pink evening gown that floated when she floated, touched ground and walked when she walked and, I had to suppose, crumbled up and sat down at almost exactly the very same time that she did. Seeing my look of worry and concern, he said, "Don't be worried. Don't EVER be concerned."

Ever polite, I stood trailing my wings along the flesh-colored floor while he seated Lucinda. Oh, he did not linger then, but betook himself at once off, being kind and considerate, I thought, to so respect our privacy. As he left, in that hoppy, hurry-along trot he had, I wondered if I wasn't hearing the best notes on his trouser legs playing and some of his coat going too. And far away I "knew" I heard the snick of a light switch changing or a gun hammer being brought back, or maybe just the tab coming off a can of beer. But it must have been the light thing, for suddenly the room that had been so rose and hopeful to the eye was not that at all anymore; it was all lush and lovely lavender, soft and restful

lavender — very cool and almost unwordly in its influence on the mind. The glass tables and chairs changed color too, becoming lilac all the way in, quite as easily as they had been rose together.

Then I beheld Lucinda! luscious, lilaceous Lucinda! and she was for that one shouting instant all that I had ever dreamed she would be. "LUCINDA!" I cried, and she of course, said, "DARLING!" Her eyes breathed once or twice then, that voluptuous closing and opening of the lashes and the slow, fluttery swing of the glance, which so few can do really well, and I felt as though I had been eaten half into her beating, pulsating gaze. But coolly I stayed cool, lit her cigarette with elan and a flourish and had the presence of mind to say, "Why is it forever called Varieties?"

"Darling," she said, "didn't you know — don't you know? And it IS not just the lights."

And I said, "Oh — ?"

Then the man came back with little things on stems, and in the things gently something lavender sloshed and looked delectible, but tasted like martini. But I had the notion that these were somehow different and pink tasting, sort of nostalgic-mildish, like June wild roses are. And being young. And feeling good. And laughing. Ah, yes! But lavender in the hands.

"He made them in the pink mixing room," Lucinda explained. — "I think he must have forgot it was you and I'm Lucinda and he should have been in the lavender mixing room mixing. Thought it was Rose, probably. Or Paula. And Royce, could be, or Brian. Or maybe just John. With Nanette." Then she laughed before she started to scream. "Damn, damn, damn, damn," she wailed, "it always happens. Nothing's ever quite special — at least, not for sure."

"But it is very quite all right," I insisted, trying to sound gallant and shut her down. And then I asked some of the most stupid of all questions in the whole wiggly world. "What am I doing here with you? What are you doing here with me. And what are we going to do about it, do you think? Huh?"

"DARLING!" she said, and she wiped her eyes with the backs of both wrists gracefully (which doesn't happen with everyone one meets). (But her eyes were not really all that moist for me, I had to know that whether I liked knowing it or not.)

"I mean," I said, "I just don't quite understand."

"Perhaps you should, REALLY! or else you shouldn't have come here." Having said that she did not expand it, made no move to explain. She just let her eyes, glistening now, breathe once or twice at me deeply, in that sweeping, devouring way she had, and set about drinking.

At this point, he was to come oozing suavely by again, bird-hopping a bit at times in his little movement music, and he carried more things on stems. "The show is just about ready to LEAP! forth," he sang out, placing our drinks just so on the lavender-glass table top and bowing deep in practiced, flowing style.

When a slice of the wall swept back, I saw a stage that for a moment made me forget Lucinda. Clear glass over pale-red water was the floor, and the walls and ceiling were also of pinkish fluids held in such delicate, colorless glass that magic widths of flesh aqueous seemed to surround the air. Across these blush-rose seas of ceiling, walls and floor, things shaped and sailed in a panorama that was hard to believe. I looked at my drink. "No, darling," she said, "this IS just something done with the lights."

Now the show swept on to the stage, and no one opened with jokes. It was not that kind of show. There were so many things bewildering and unusual in the performances, but none of it was meant to be a farce, I felt sure. And out of all the wonderful acts and entertainments seething and flowing before me on

that pink, almost fairylike stage, I picked the man who walked to sad music upside down on his hands and, for extra effect at times, jiggled on his fingernails. (Or so it seemed to me he did it!) And this man who went upside down and seemed to dance so strangely, pumped uneven, hurt legs as he kicked a giant bubble along in the rose-colored atmosphere; and in the bubble there was something that looked like a little windstorm done with air incarnadine. Then all at once I could see the bubble in detail, and a whisper of tinkly sound at my side let me know my attendant had given me viewing glasses, had put them in my hands, had deftly raised them to my eyes. And I perceived then that the commotion in the bubble was not really a toy tornado at all staged with a coral wind funnel, but a little hurt-legged man prancing upon his hands, upon the finger tips of those tiny, roseate hands. This man also was beautifully pumping the legs that didn't match kicking a bubble. In his bubble I felt sure there was a wind twirl, because there seemed more concentration here and a larger meaningfulness overall. Somehow.

Perhaps I shouldn't have, but in my impatience I snapped my fingers, and the fury of lavender air storming toward me and the notes of hurrying music told me he was rushing to reach me. "I'm so sorry, sir," he said over and over, and he seemed truly so contrite and so regretful that he had been late with my new viewing glasses that he allowed the upper part of his body to bounce up and down several times, making dipsies that almost touched his quite modest, really scrawny, beard each time to the floor. And all around, of course, small music seemed sougning and sighing from his scored clothes. The bowing and apologies over, he handed me the glasses and helped me to adjust them. "Are you all right, sir?" he asked many times, and I answered many times, "Oh, hey! these are THE best, sir," and I even tried to reassure him with a money reward. But he would have none of that. "Oh no, SIR!" he reacted, setting me straight very sternly.

So I got down seriously to the business of looking into the glasses, but I soon saw, despite my many stout reassurances to the contrary, that they really would not do at all. Next I, using the wings I still had from Bavert's *Top o' the Hill*, but not so good now (the martini and June wild roses weren't holding the way they should for Bavert's wings!), clambered and flapped up to one of the glass table tops, sick leg and everything, and I snapped my fingers and I snapped them!

And I heard Lucinda say, "Darling! DARLING!" several times.

"Yes," I said, "YES! Lucinda!" But it was as though she were not near me.

"Please, darling! please COME down. And please QUIT snapping your fingers so much. Look MORE at ME," she begged. And she wept and she shouted, "Oh damn, damn, damn, damn. What a turkey!"

"Yes, Lucinda," I said, "YES!" But he was always pushing toward me now; through the lavender he would run — the music playing — with different glasses, so I knew that I had been snapping my fingers, signaling for better viewers. I was deep inside the juggled bubbles now . . . leaning down to snatch up his new offering each time and watching from the table top.

But after awhile, 'way far deep into the hours, when I studied spheres no larger than grains of sand, still hoping for the last bubble or a dead juggler — some cessation, hopefully some meaningful culmination — the little man said, on tiptoe straining a pair of new ones up to me, "Sorry, sir, if you don't finish and get it — FIND OUT! — this time, sir. Because this is the last pair, sir. The show is closing soon, sir. Changing to start tomorrow!" So I took this last pair and probed, peered, searched, sought and regarded as hard as ever I could do it. Far into the act of a man walking upside down I scrutinized a bubble MUCH

smaller than any grain of sand. And I saw only a familiar concentration that dissolved into a tiny figure pumping his hurt, uneven legs while he cavorted on his hands . . .

Clutching my last chance at "seeing," I somehow got down from the table top and fell into a sitting-heap position in a glass chair directly across from Lucinda. My wings trailed and felt spent — all puny now — but I figured it would do not a bit of good at this point — just a rest pause in my imminent coming to pieces — to worry about such small faults of condition. Then I heard that click like a bolt snick and a gun hammer coming back, or an easy-open beer can being pulled (it WAS a light-switch), and the yellow lights came on just as the door slid past the pink stage, blotting out the actors and the strange, swimming shapes. I placed the last glasses aside, high atop the big pile of glasses I had used, and I saw that the pink Lucinda looked different in the yellow illumination — unrecognizable almost, so altered from what she had been in lavender all through the night. In short, she was quite faded in the yellow light like daylight, but she looked frighteningly ever-so-wise. And I felt very old. "Darling," she sighed, "oh darling."

"Why is it forever called Varieties?" I asked.

She scooped up a double handful of the viewers I had used and a great gleam of seeing held her pink-yellow face for just an instant. "Darling," she cried, "OH, DARLING! I think I know now what you —" Then she arose quickly, and I saw, for just a little while, how in a kinder circumstance she might have been truly as beautiful and as wonderful as pink and yellow flowers waving along home yards. "You searched through ALL the bubbles, got caught up in the farce . . . watched ONLY yourself . . . got smaller and smaller and smaller. — You could have — WE COULD HAVE — The trick was —"

She never told me the rest. She broke off and started raving, "Oh damn, damn, damn, damn, damn, what a cuckoo!" as she threw herself about the tables and neutralized some of the glass chairs. Her gown was a swirl of dirty, unbecoming color in plain light as she swung the glass chairs to their splintery deaths as chairs and screamed just once, but no mistaking, "DAMN YOU!" The light was not pretty either — hard and clear — cold, hard, and clear.

Then she was gone. They were all gone, even the little man and the music of his clothes. . . . ●

David R. Bunch

Poet, novelist, story-teller par excellence, David R. Bunch has this to say about his craft:

"I'm not in this business of writing primarily to describe or explain or entertain, you know. I'm here with the satirical comment, and the social statement and the grim assessment to make the reader think; I'm here to tear the utter shell off Sham and dynamite the facade from the lying face of Pretense. I'm here to solve and resolve the world. Even if I have to grab the reader up (with words, of

course) and swing him through the air like a bat (baseball, that is), I WILL startle him (I hope) to awareness and pound his utter face (thinking) into the utter lamp-posts of all his flawed villages and towns. I hate almost everything now, I fear almost everything now, I mistrust almost everything now, I KNOW almost everything now is meaningless and drear . . ."

**Quoted in "Contemporary Author"*

SLIME CREATURES FROM SPACE

They have no control.
Their ships come crashing
down like broken meteors,
trailing white flame.
Impact always brains them.

Hatches turn with the sounds
of rusty mason jar lids, come
open with the agonies of old
door hinges. Inside, the
heat brings swirling steam.

Mars, or Venus, or Alpha
Whatsitauri? Jupiter or
Saturn or Mercury? Will
we see a tentacle, or an
eye on a quivering stalk?

We gather around and wait,
for we've seen this before.
Someone has brought a half-
undressed girl along for
our perverse entertainment.

An ancient Sioux sits quiet,
fingering his knife in silent
anticipation. The gods have
returned, as they promised.
But returned far too late.

The soldiers stand around and
clutch their weapons and tell
each other dirty lies, chuckling
all the while. The Generals and
the Padre keep their distance.

We have all been here before.
The late night movie show, and
we have come, perhaps, to the
set. The girl parades, holding
enamel mugs over her breasts.

The photographer chews her gum
and strides around the pit,
eyebrow cocked, searching for
the best angles. The reporter
leans on a tree and scribbles.

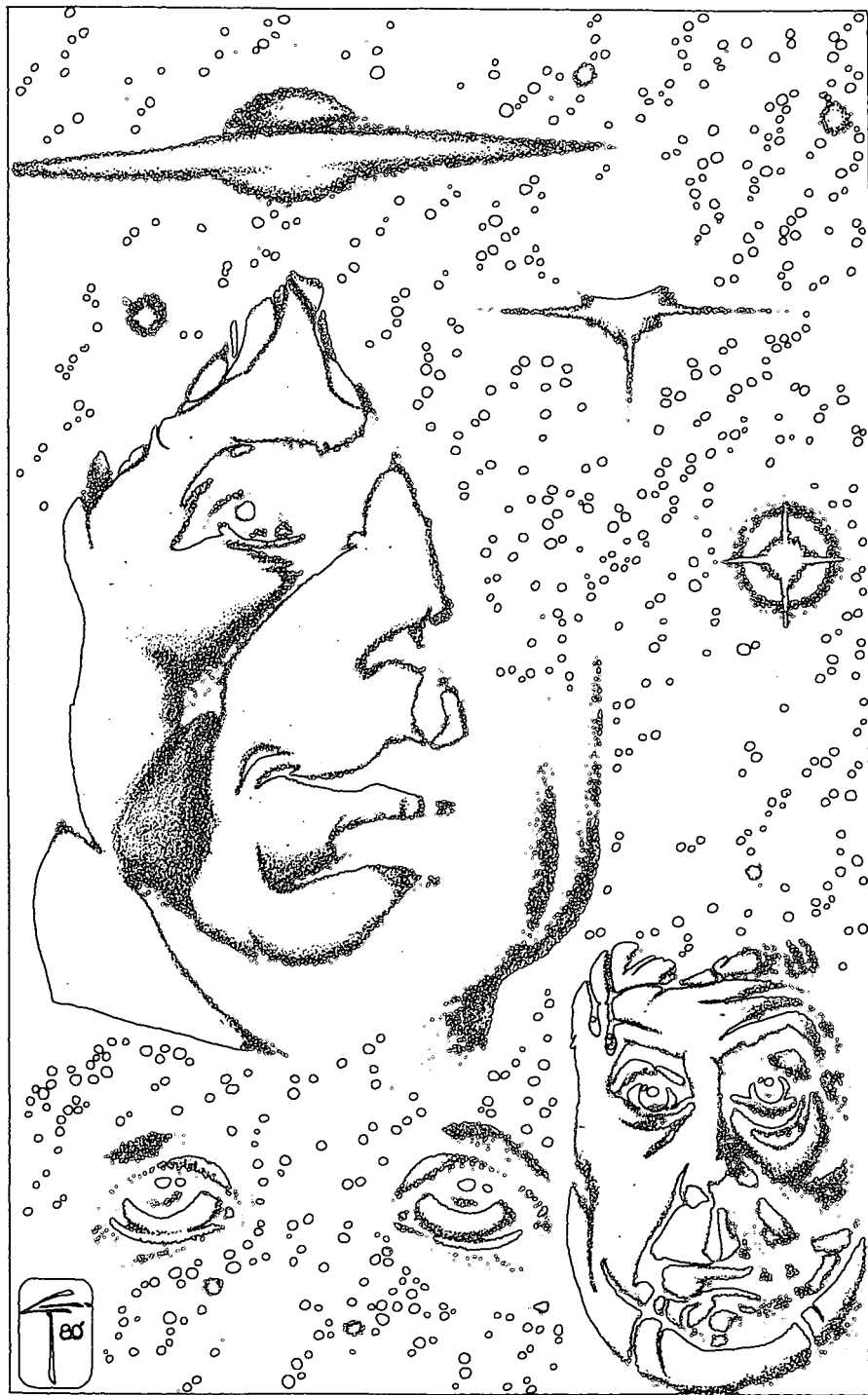
They rise like golden blobs.
They pulse and writhe and
turn in their flight, looking
us over. They hover and gaze
and thus bore us all to tears.

We are disappointed in you, we
tell them. You have eaten no-
one. You have blown up no tanks.
You have not tried to conquer
the Earth. In short, you suck.

You, we say, have obligations.
Molest a half-naked girl, or
burn a priest, or steal the
Empire State Building. Litter
the sidewalks, at the very least.

We expected more, we cry, for
our efforts. Slime monsters,
a mad computer, horror, blood,
violence. Yes, they say, but in-
peace we come, for all mankind.

—Steven Edward McDonald



Illustrated by Gary Freeman

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Wayne Wightman

THE SEMI-HAPPY LIFE of GORMAN RIMLY

(Earthship, Colony Cruiser Mantis

Date: September 24, 2307, Relative

A hollowed-out asteroid some 61.2 miles at its greatest length and 23 miles in diameter, the Mantis spins leisurely as it drifts on its course that will take its fourth generation of 26,750 colonists in the general direction of Cygnus. They carry their culture with them.

YOU'RE SICK, Rimly. Listen to yourself some time."
Gorman Rimly listened intently but only heard Dunny talking. Dunny was his forewoman at Halcyon Drug Group.

"And you do that *all* the time. The way you stand there with that look on your face, I expect you to start drooling."

Gorman hastily wiped his lower lip with the back of his hand. It came away dry. He expected to start drooling himself — he got very nervous when people spoke loudly to him.

"This isn't good, Rimly."

"Why not?" He hadn't meant to say that. Dunny snatched off her helmet pad and whacked it across her leg. "Sorry," Gorman said. He felt his mouth begin to quiver.

"Why isn't it good? Why, you ask? Tank scrubbing is punishment, Rimly. It shortens your life. Slopping around with those chemicals makes some of your organs great big and it makes some of the others real teeny small. Now, Gorman..." She flapped her hands around in front of her face. She had a pretty face — she never worked with the chemicals. "Gorman, *why* do you sing while you scrub tanks? Why do you do that?"

"I... um..."

"What I thought, Rimly. You know —" She gritted her teeth and rolled her eyes back in her head. It seemed to be involuntary. "What I can't explain to Mr. Ditwiller is A) why you sing in the tanks and B) why you say such things as —" She had trouble unfolding a small square of yellow paper. It tore in two and she had to fit the pieces together as she read: "— as quote, I hate the god damned world, unquote. Can you explain that one to me, Gorman?" she asked, her voice suddenly pitching very high.

"Well, I sing in the tanks because I'm glad to be there," he said slowly. He didn't want to be ambiguous.

"You're glad to be there." She shook her head as she stared at her boots. Gorman also looked at her feet. He figured her feet must be troubling her.

"I would rather be home than in the tanks," he said finally.

"But when I'm in the tanks, I'm glad to be there." He thought he would try a little levity: "Better there than nowhere!"

"Gorman," Dunny said, her words larded with exhaustion, "inside the Mantis we have to work as a team, all however-many-of-us-there-are-today. You and I have a very important job here at Halycon."

Gorman nodded. He had been told to do that when people started repeating themselves.

"If the drugs we make here aren't pure; if they aren't the best quality, do you know what will happen?"

"The people will tear the ship apart?"

"We will be restrained, Gorman, and we might even get recycled."

"I see. I certainly don't want be fired." Perhaps, he thought, being an agreeable good sport would please Dunny — besides, he really didn't want to get fired. After they fired you, they spread your ashes across all intersections of Mantis City where the publicans ran back and forth across your remains. This they called recycling.

"Gorman, you've been on punishment since you came to us. On your last job you tried to seduce the director of the Nixon Organ Bank — thank god you haven't tried anything like that around here."

"Actually he wanted my parts, Ms. Dunny. I just patted him on the shoulder and told him I understood but that I wanted them too."

"You patted the director on the shoulder?"

"I guess he thought I wanted to seduce him. The next day you put me in the tanks."

"You touched the director . . ." She stared at her feet again.

"Nobody touches the director. You sing in the tanks when you scrub them out. You like it there."

Gorman nodded and smiled. But he sensed that being agreeable wasn't pleasing Dunny as he'd expected it would.

"And you said you hated the god damned world, meaning the Mantis, I presume."

Gorman looked at her feet. He wondered if she had all her toes. But then he remembered she didn't handle the chemicals, so she probably did. He decided to say something that would indicate his liking for her.

"I hope your feet are better soon."

She looked him in the eyes and cocked her head a little. Gorman wondered if he had bungled again when he saw the way her mouth twitched.

"I give up on you, Gorman. You don't make sense to me. Mr. Ditwiller wanted me to explain to him exactly what you are, but I don't know what you are. There have been rumors that aliens are among us disguised as humans. The best I could do for you is to claim you're an alien." She shook her head. "Here y'are, Gorman." She handed him a small white paper. "You do read, don't you?"

"Oh yes. I haven't been allowed to have books since I was put on punishment. I hope I haven't forgotten."

Dunny's eyes went back in her head again. Gorman watched her carefully to be sure they came back down — but what would he have done if they hadn't?

Hit her on the forehead to jar them loose?

He studied the notification. He was scheduled for a medical examination at the Hawaiian Gardens Retraining Center for the Potentially Ill.

"Sorry, Rimly," she said, putting the helmet pad back over the top of her head. "There's no reason I can give Mr. Ditwiller for your attitudes or behavior. You hate the world and you're glad when you're in the tanks." She shook her head.

"I'm glad to be here talking to you, too."

"I'll keep that in mind. Good luck at the Retraining Center."

"I'm going to be retrained? Will I work here with you afterwards?"

"Retraining is what they do there," she said briskly.

Gorman didn't understand what he saw next. She seemed to be sad — almost crying even.

"I won't mind retraining," he said, trying to make her feel better. "I like learning new things. It's one of my favorite pastimes."

Dunny quickly walked away.

"If they don't send me back here to work," Gorman called after her, "I'll try to come by anyway just to say hello."

Awkwardly and without turning to look at him, she waved behind her.

Gorman waved at her receding back.

GORMAN LOVED to walk through the city. Even from the gates at the Halcyon plant, he had been able to see the spires of the Hawaiian Gardens Retraining Center for the Potentially Ill. The government before the present one had built row upon row of cheap dwellings along the streets he now passed through. They had not been interesting when they were new, but after the food riots of last year, when they had all been put to the torch, they took on a strange new character. Sometimes only a wall would be left standing. Between the black scars of fire, a patch of floral wallpaper would peek through. Twisted half-burned rafters stood at improbable angles. Children ran screeching through the charred wonderland, playing unguessable games. Gorman loved the street.

He filled his lungs with air and lifted his eyes to the sky. There was more haze today than usual, but through it he could see the opposite curvature of the Mantis ground-wall. The irregular dark splotch was the Ditwiller Forest Remains. And equally dark was Sunrise Lake. He had never been there. But a friend of his had been. The friend had ignored the warning signs and had gone swimming anyway. He'd had cramps for a week and then — strange as it seemed to everyone — he coughed up his uvula and was better the next day.

Gorman stood before the tall doors of the Hawaiian Gardens building, took one last breath of fresh air, and plunged inside. He'd never had a medical examination — he expected it would be interesting.

The waiting room was of a comfortable size, though there were no chairs to sit in. Behind the desk, a black shining piece of polished thermoplast, sat the doctor. The sign on the outside of the door identified him as Dr. Gnorrd.

Gorman could tell that Dr. Gnorrd made a good salary, for he was very fat. Fat hung out of his stretched collar like yeasty dough. He was studying the back of one hand when Gorman entered and seemed as yet not to be aware of his presence.

Gorman stood waiting in front of the desk. To pass the time, he made up a conversation in his head. He often did this. It was the next best thing to having someone to talk to.

"Do you think they'll let you pick what you'll be retrained for?" Gorman

asked.

"Who knows? They might. What would you like to be?" Gorman countered.

"I'd like to be the person who turns on the sun in the morning."

"That doesn't seem like it would require much special knowledge," Gorman said to himself.

"Maybe it would only take a few days to learn. I'd sure like to be the one to turn on the sun every morning."

"Card please."

Gorman started. Sometimes his private conversations took unusual turns but —

"Card please." It was the doctor speaking this time. Gorman was relieved.

"What card?" Gorman finally managed to say.

"Your Omnimed card. The yellow one." Dr. Gnorrd sounded exhausted, as though each word might be his last. Gorman was amazed, too, by the way the doctor's mouth wrapped around each word.

"This one?" Gorman said after digging through his pockets.

"That's your Evercare card," he said, the fat weighing heavily on his cheeks. He seemed to be looking at the wall through Gorman's head. Gorman wanted to turn to see if there was something over there worth looking at, but he kept on digging instead.

"This one?"

"A Surgicard is not an Omnimed card," the doctor droned.

Gorman had to shake himself out of a reverie every time he saw Gnorrd's lips masticating his words. He pulled out more cards and soon the desk was littered with them. Dr. Gnorrd didn't even shake his head No when he saw the wrong color.

"I don't know why I should even ask you this," the doctor said idly as he poked two fingers into one of the creases of his neck, "but do you — is it just possible — might you know your Omnimed number by heart?"

Gorman couldn't take his eyes off those lips — they seemed to live a life of their own. Half tranced, Gorman recited, "209-571-4727-12."

Dr. Gnorrd's thick eyebrows climbed up on his forehead, but his eyes remained tired slits. "We'll see," he said with a quivering of flesh.

Little fingers touched the numbers on the console. "Ah. Are you Mr. Gorman Rimly?"

"Yes." He smiled. He always liked being addressed by his full name.

"A lovely name for a lovely man." Dr. Gnorrd's mouth turned up at the corners, but it did not look exactly like a smile to Gorman. "You'll need a duplicate card." His words now slid liquidly together and his lips hardly moved at all.

His desktop console made a noise like wire being rasped across somebody's front teeth. He handed Gorman a plastic rectangle. "You'll need this later. Say, Mr. Rimly —" (He leaned forward across the polished black desktop, the flesh on his arms pressing up around the tops of his arms). "— since my days here are generally pretty boring and since it says here that you have non-standard attitudes..." He looked back at the screen mounted above the console. "... and 'are given to peculiarities of expression,' I was wondering if you might be willing to make my day a little more memorable." Small as they were, Dr. Gnorrd's eyes lit up.

"I just came here to be retrained," Gorman said.

"Oh, and retrained you shall be. But first, perhaps you could tell me a story. A humorous story."

"I'm not very good at that, doctor. People usually laugh at me instead of my

stories."

"I'm willing to laugh at you, Mr. Rimly. It's been a dull day. I'm willing to laugh at anything. But I'm beginning to get slightly irritated with the delay." He took a bottle from a drawer and poured a little of the red liquid into a paper cup and tossed it down his throat. Gorman recognized it as a product of Halcyon Drug Company: cherry-flavored Dexadrax — very popular with professional people.

"Did I mention, Mr. Rimly, that there are two kinds of retraining?"

Gorman shook his head. He noted that the doctor's eyes were twinkling even more than before.

"There is retraining, and there is retraining with extreme prejudice. You wouldn't like that kind."

"I'd like the kind that trained me to turn on the sun every morning."

Dr. Gnorrd suddenly began pounding his desk with both forearms. His head jerked back and forth making the rolls of fat under his chin squish in and out. Gorman thought this an interesting effect.

"Listen to me, you worthless baggage!" Gnorrd bellowed. "I know where you work and I know all you drug handlers pilfer notoriously and I'm sure when you go home to your nasty little wife and eat all those lovely little pills, that marvelous little wicicisms just *parade* through your mindless little head. Don't they?"

Gorman had the distinct feeling he should say yes. "Yes," he said.

"Then let's have a little levity to brighten the doctor's day. And don't try anything irregular. See this yellow thing here, this button? See that? All I need to do is touch that and you get special treatment."

"I've never had special treatment before."

"Maybe we could arrange it before you go. Truss guns and tranquilizers appeal to a certain set. Listen Rimly, I'm starting to get agitated again."

Gorman didn't have to be told that. The doctor's lips twitched so violently that they sometimes disappeared entirely in the shadows of his fat.

"If you don't want me to get agitated and accidentally hit this yellow button over here, you'd better start getting humorous."

"I heard a riddle yesterday."

"Tell it." Dr. Gnorrd took out the bottle of red Dexadrax and set it on his desk next to the red-stained paper cup.

"It's about the three-armed sex object and the brick."

"Heard it." His fingers danced around the yellow button.

"How about the one about the eunuch and the forty pounds of liver?"

"I abominate organ jokes."

"Know what happened when the doctor swallowed his wife's —"

"Heard it." His flesh rippled as a spasm of revulsion shook him. "You're forcing me to do this, you know." He poured the cup full of Dexadrax and drank it down. "This is your last chance to make me chuckle, Rimly." He poured another cupful. "Last chance."

"Do you know what one cancer said to the other?"

A buzzer went off somewhere down the hallway. For a second Gorman thought he was about to get hit by truss guns and tranquilizers.

"Come with me, Rimly. Your room is ready." He maneuvered himself away from the desk and led Gorman down a hallway of doors. From his wrist dangled a gleaming chrome prod. "I'm taking you to Room 37. There is obviously no humor in your soul. But I need to check on these other patient people on the way down. Let's see here."

He opened Room 18 — it was no larger than a closet inside. And in it, clamped to a chair, a bald, white-skinned woman sat sweating. Her eyes looked

like polished plastic. The doctor poked her twice with the prod. There was no response.

"Hm. Let's give her a little thrill, what do you say?" Dr. Gnorrd adjusted a dial on the butt of the prod and poked the woman again. This time she jerked and batted her eyes.

"Twelve point five," the doctor said, making a note on a small pad. "She's still with us. Retraining is tedious work."

Room 22 was worse. A desperate hum came through the man's chattering teeth. Gnorrd jolted him. It had no effect — the teeth still rattled. "Let's give him something he won't remember to write home about." Again he adjusted the prod and touched it to the man's neck. Every muscle snapped and only the clamps kept him from flying out of the chair.

"There we go — an even 24." He made a note.

Room 35. This one didn't look good. All white skin and drool. "Stubborn case," Gnorrd said as he closed the door. "Let's guess about 14.3 — you think that's about right?"

"This is retraining?" Gorman asked slowly. "Will I be able to turn on the sun if I go through this?"

"You'll be lucky if you can turn over in bed," Gnorrd guffawed. "Forget I said that." He made a note. "I'll see to it you forget that. I realize," he said expansively, "that this doesn't look good from a detached point of view. But don't worry about it. Got your card ready?"

Gorman saw the number 37 on an upcoming door.

"Don't give any of this a second thought. I see to it that every patient in for retraining has all his memories erased from the second he came in the front door. In their place I'll give you our standard Seashore Recollection. You'll leave here in a day or so thinking you've had a wonderful time at the beach. Want to go to the beach, Mr. Rimly?"

Gorman's mouth opened and closed several times but no sound came out.

"Very good. Just turn around. Just back in and sit down — *there*. Now have a nice time, and I'll look in on you from time to time." The chrome prod knocked against the doorframe.

Gorman watched the doctor's bloated shape, framed in the doorway, move back into the hall. He really didn't want to be closed in.

"While you're having your preliminary interview, I'll try to guess what one cancer said to the other." He giggled suddenly. It made Gorman's stomach flop. "I'll try to be back before you're sent to the beach." He slammed the door and Gorman heard the lock click twice.

"Hello, I am Doctor Gnorrd."

"Huh? What?"

The voice came from behind him. "All information pertaining to your needs will be processed by MeMeEx. Mechanized Medical Examination is a quick, efficient, cost-conservative method of diagnosing employee retraining requirements. Please insert your Omnimed card in the slot beside your left hand."

When he did so, something inside the slot grabbed the card, pulled it into the chair arm, and then just as suddenly pushed it back out into his fingertips.

"How do you do, Mr. Gorman Rimly," Gnorrd's voice said smoothly.

"How do I do what?"

"I understand you are not happy with the world. I hear you said, 'I hate the god damned world.' Now, what did you mean by that?"

Gorman felt something creeping around his wrists and ankles. In the gloom he could see nothing at all.

"Halcyon Drug Group has been very good to you, you know."

"My supervisor, Ms. Dunny says they've been just wonderful to all us employees," Gorman said, hoping a cooperative attitude would maybe keep him from going all the way to the beach. "Why, I heard about this one fellow who works over in the dehydrating section and when his fingernails came off, why, the clinic got him some plastic ones just as soon as the sores healed up. He got to go back to dehydrating right away and is happy as —"

"Undoubtedly he is, Mr. Rimly. Now, tell me why you hate the god damned world or I'll give you something so unpleasant to think about that you won't remember it till next year."

"Yes, sir. It was a month ago Halcyon made us go to the Ditwiller Forest Remains for a day of relaxation. They showed us how the forest worked and how the animals lived."

"That sounds very peaceful and relaxing. Nature is wonderfully calming, isn't it."

"That was my problem, sir. I didn't think it was wonderful." Gorman realized that whatever had been creeping around his wrists and ankles now cinched tight. "I thought it was pretty horrible. One thing eats something smaller than itself, then it's eaten by something bigger, and when it dies, it's eaten by something bigger, and when it dies, it's eaten by something smaller. Everything eats something else. They wanted us to think it was wonderful. I got depressed."

"But that's the way of our little world here inside the *Mantis*. It's all very natural and balanced.

"That's the bad part. Nature balances itself by being a slaughterhouse."

"And that depresses you and makes you say awful things about our world," the voice said carefully.

"I guess so. When I look around the city —"

"Mr. Rimly, your anxieties, your fears and little worries are now over. From now on, you will have only a happy life to look forward to."

"You're sending me to the beach?"

"Our personality redefinition program will enable you, Mr. Rimly, in only three short days, to once again enjoy nature, love the world, and do your job for longer hours with less fatigue."

"I want to be the one to turn on the sun in the morning," he said quickly, thinking that if he had to go to the beach, maybe he could come back with a new vocation.

"We will begin with —" The voice clipped off. Lights came on, the door opened, and framed in the corridor light stood Dr. Gnorrd, his mouth wet and red-stained with Dexadrax. One corner of his mouth twisted in a grin that hid one end of his lips in the wobbly pudge of one cheek.

"C'mon out of there, you little bugger!" It was a laughing invitation this time, not a demand. "C'mon out!" He reached in and pulled at him by his shirt, forgetting the restraints holding Rimly in place. His breath bathed Gorman's face with the stingingly sharp odor of Dexadrax — with a hint of cherry. When he held Gorman and talked into his face, Gorman saw that the doctor's eyes no longer had any pupils — they were just little flat brown disks.

"C'mon back down here to my desk — we got some unfinished business." He pushed a button releasing his patient and giggling breathily, led Gorman back to the waiting room. Red Dexadrax had been spilled all over the desktop.

"Okay," he said. His face deadened and a quick vicious snarl twitched across his face. "Now — you make me laugh or I get irritated. Then I hit the Irritating

Person button right here — I showed you this, didn't I?"

Gorman nodded.

A giggle rumbled Gnorrd's face and tore it open when he bellowed then whined into the middle registers and shrieked upward into breathy inaudibility.

Gorman's mouth went dry and ashy.

"Well? Put it to me. Make me laugh." Gnorrd's face went sour again.

"Let me see . . . uh. There were two cancers, see, and do you know what one said to the other?"

"What's 'at, cute-face?" He drank out of the Dexadrax bottle until it was empty.

"Well, one said, 'Tumor of us and we could metastasize.'"

At first, Gorman thought Doctor Gnorrd had burped, the way his stomach heaved, but it wasn't that — it was the beginning of a volcanic outpouring of hot air and red fluid. He sprayed Gorman and the desk with Dexadrax — but curiously there was still no vocal sound. His head jerked back, his flat eyes staring weirdly at Gorman across the hillocks of his cheeks. Then his jaw dropped open, his mouth like a wide fracture across marshy red-stained plains. Adipose tectonics set up shock patterns that made the different continents of Gnorrd's body vibrate at different frequencies. Then came the noise. It was something like laughter. It was very loud.

Gorman didn't think the joke was all that funny, but then he'd been told many times that there were many, many things he did not understand.

Doctor Gnorrd lurched up and around the desk, the red Dexadrax racing along the creases under his chin. Gorman thought at first that Gnorrd had designs on him — but again he was wrong. Gnorrd dodged past him, a howling mass of counter-thrusting seismic forces, and clawed at the first door down the hallway. When he got it open muttering various words from the punchline, Gorman realized Gnorrd was simply trying to get inside the restroom. When the door closed on the doctor, Gorman breathed a great sigh.

What he needed most was a place to collapse. The only chair was behind the desk, so he sat there, hoping to hear Gnorrd bang and thump on the door — giving him some warning — before he came back out.

A second later, the toilet door flew open, and Gnorrd stood there, framed in it, a look of appalled disgust on his red-stained face. "You!" he screamed. "Get away from my desk!" He came at Gorman like a fast-motion glacier of fat. "One good joke and you think you can take over the place!" The doctor saw Gorman cast a quick glance at the panel of buttons. "You! Get away from there!"

Gorman hit the yellow button. Why not? Among other things Doctor Gnorrd was an Irritating Person.

Soft mesh nets threw themselves out of the floor and held the doctor's body momentarily immobilized while the soft *thwoot* of airborne hypodermics came from the sides of the room.

Gnorrd dropped his arms, smiled, and went rubbery. Somehow the nets were sucked back into thumb-sized holes in the floor. He stood there dazed and wobbling.

On the console there was a "37/On" and a "37/Hold" — the latter was lit red. He touched the "37/On" and it turned green. While he was at it, he touched the "Hold" buttons of the other room.

What happened next, Gorman thought quite unusual. Without conscious will, he rose from the chair, took the doctor by the hand and led him down the corridor to Room 37. Gorman heard himself saying, "The beach is very nice this time of the year."

"... love the beach," the doctor mumbled serenely.

Gorman backed him in through the door and gave him a little push. The chair snapped his wrists and ankles in place.

"We will begin with a little sedation, Mr. Rimly," said the doctor's taped marshmallow voice from the wall speakers.

Gorman let the door close of its own accord.

THE CYANOZOL ran down the sides of the stainless steel tank in curious patterns, as it always did. He slopped it over the bottom of the tank and then rinsed with the uroflouremic acid. It bubbled more than usual and steamed up his goggles. There wasn't much to see inside the tanks, but he didn't like it when he couldn't see it.

"Rimly? Is that you in there? Come out!" It was Dunny's voice calling from the lower platform.

"What for?" Gorman yelled back. "I like it here!" The echo was deafening. He told himself not to shout so loud next time.

"How come you're back so soon?"

"Because the doctor went to the beach instead of me."

"Rimly! Come out of there!"

He climbed awkwardly back up the ladder. It was difficult because of all the clothes he had to wear. He stuck his head up over the edge. "What do you want? I'm cleaning like I'm supposed to."

"Gorman, you have a new job. I was told to give you this when you got back from the beach. But since you didn't go..."

"What is it?" It looked official as nearly as he could tell — but an official-looking document usually meant it was something unpleasant they had in store for you that they couldn't do any other way but officially. He started to climb back into the tank.

"It says here," Dunny went on, "that you're supposed to go to Dr. Gnorrd's office and work as his assistant."

"What?!" Gorman nearly swallowed his tongue.

"You're supposed to help him with the patients and do office-type things that he'll want done."

"I don't think he's going to know what he wants done exactly."

"Right, you said he went to the beach." She put a finger to her lips and thought hard for a second. "Well, I guess you don't start till he gets back. But, you know, you just help him out with his decisions and such about people like yourself."

Gorman's face began to light up. "You mean it's the kind of job where I help him out with his decisions? And I help him decide who gets retrained and who doesn't?"

"Well, I don't know if you'd have *that* much say. Gorman, I'm sorry you didn't get the job with the sun-keepers. This must be a big let-down." Her face took on a hopeless look.

Gorman hurried down the outside of the tank. "It's okay," he said. "I'd like to work for Dr. Gnorrd. He needs my help. Sun'll get turned on by somebody." He wiggled out of the protective clothing.

"Come back sometime and say hello to me," Dunny said.

"I will, I will, but I have to hurry back to the office now. Lotta people need help." He hurried down the ramp toward the factory's main gate.

Dunny was chuckling. "You kill me, Gorman!" she shouted as she waved. "At least," he called back, "I won't send you to the beach!"

The Earthship Mantis drifts through space, on a course that will take it to new worlds. In the hearts of these colonists, there is one desire greater than any other: to tame the stars in the name of man. They knew how they were needed by the Universe — and they were on their way. ●

Wayne Wightman's Advice to Beginning Writers — by Mitchell S. White

MW: You've been writing about fifteen years, right?

WW: Yes. I wrote my first novel when I was 18. It wasn't very good.

MW: I don't think I've seen that one. What was the title?

WW: It *should* have been *The Popped Pimple*. Very self-indulgent, juvenile, eighteen-year-old's type of book.

MW: Would you recommend any 18-year-old begin his writing career with a novel?

WW: Definitely. It teaches you things you can't learn any other way. It can also teach you that you might want to go into another field.

MW: Any advice for someone just starting out who wants to write?

WW: Writing seems like a great career because you work when you want, and it appears to outsiders that you're on a perpetual vacation. You aren't seen leaving the house each morning with your lunch in a bag — in fact, no one ever sees you working so they assume you're

watching tv and drinking beer most of your life. A lot of people resent you for it . . . Considering the hours I've spent writing and the money I've made over 15 years. I'd say I've cleared about 12¢ an hour.

MW: So your advice is . . . ?

WW: Think carefully before you decide you want to be a writer. But if you want that kind of life, there are two very important things one should do. *One:* Go at it tooth and claw. Remember each morning that this is another day in which to excell. This could be your best day. *Two:* Work at understanding what other people find interesting. You can go about that a hundred different ways. But you can't write successfully unless you know what other people are interested in, what they like.

MW: If you couldn't be a writer, what would you be?

WW: Probably a drunk. Maybe a religious fanatic. Perhaps a veterinarian.



Shari Prange Copycat

IT WAS A rich neighborhood, with one embarrassing plague: mice. They thrived in the huge, old mansions, and no amount of traps, cats, or poison seemed to have any effect. One wealthy resident, however, was free of the vermin. She had an exceptionally fast, wily, and vicious tomcat that quickly dispatched any mousy intruders. For this, she prized the cat greatly, and bragged of him to her despairing neighbors.

But one day, she noticed that the cat was starting to show his age, and she realized she would soon be without him. Determined not to lose her prize, the woman spent a great deal of money, and had the cat cloned. She raised the kitten with tender care, and by the time the old tom finally died, the kitten was full-grown and ready to assume his duties. He was exactly like the old tom in every respect, and the woman was very pleased.

But it wasn't long before she noticed mice starting to inhabit the house, with no sign that the new cat was killing any of them. One day she decided to follow the cat, and find out just what was happening. She crept stealthily behind him, up and down the halls of the mansion. Time after time, a mouse would dart across the floor, sometimes almost under the cat's feet. He would merely blink at it, and continue on his leisurely way. Throughout the entire day, the cat refused to kill, or even swat at, a single rodent.

Finally, the woman concluded, to her great sorrow, that a strolling clone gathers no mice. ●

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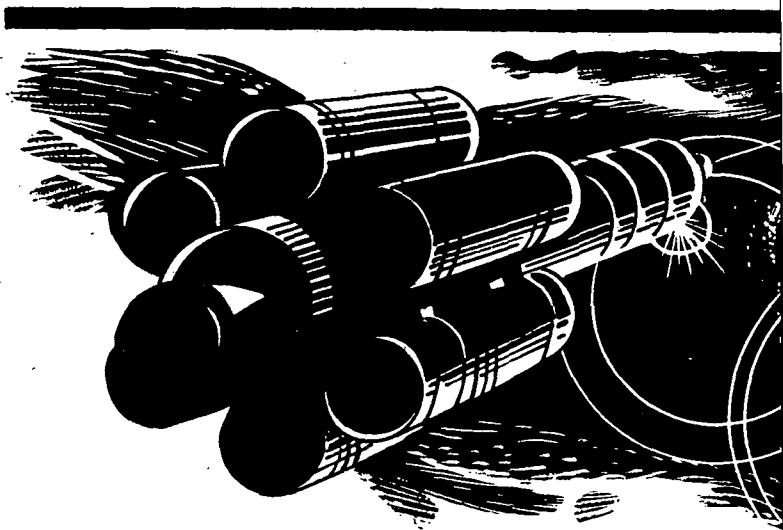
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TIMOTHY ZAHN

The Energy Crisis of 2215

ITS BIRTH HAD been in the fiery turbulence of the primordial explosion, and for the billions of years since then the tiny black hole had drifted quietly through the expanding universe. Not once in all that time had it found itself closer than half a light-year to any star, much less approaching to within a few million miles as it was doing now. But there is a first time for everything.

Never very large to begin with, the black hole had steadily been losing mass during its long lifetime, and its gravitational effects were virtually undetectable even tens of meters away. But the strange laws which governed its existence required that a decrease in mass be accompanied by an increase in effective temperature, and so the black hole was now radiating energy and particles as if it were at a quadrillion degrees. Without this power output it might have slipped unnoticed through the solar system; as things were, it hadn't a hope of doing so.

The black hole was just crossing the orbit of Saturn when it was first detected by a routine gamma-ray scan. Identification came soon afterwards; and on Earth, Luna, Ceres, Hestia, and the Space Colonies debates were soon raging as to what should be done about the intruder. A large body of opinion was for letting the black hole continue unmolested along its hyperbolic path, or possibly even assisting it on its way out of the system. But others saw a unique opportunity in the chance meeting, and their views eventually prevailed, though at the



cost of bitter feelings and many broken friendships.

The preparations took even longer than the debates had, but finally all was ready, and on January 1, 2215, the first of four specially-designed space tugs matched orbits with the black hole and began pouring protons into it. As the intruder's positive charge increased, the tugs used electric fields to nudge it from its original course and, eventually, into a stable orbit at one of the Earth-Luna Lagrangian points.

Project Firefly had begun.

DR. RAY CARTER, Director of the Firefly Project, ran his eyes over the bank of monitor screens that wrapped themselves around the main control board like a lucky horseshoe. The glance was pure reflex; everything had been ready for the past two hours and the only thing holding up the works now were

the speeches still going on from the main auditorium. He felt no impatience, though; if turning Day One into a media event would help sell Firefly to the public, it had Carter's blessing. Glancing around the room, Carter noticed a familiar figure staring out the port into the blackness outside. Walking carefully in his velcro shoes, he joined the other. "You can't see it from here, Senator," he remarked by way of greeting.

Senator Chou didn't turn. "I know," he said, his voice carefully neutral. Nodding toward the port, he continued, "It's two kilometers to the DeVega dipole accelerator platform, a hundred meters to the energy collector sphere, and another half kilometer to the black hole itself. And the whole thing a superbly engineered waste of money."

Carter winced slightly. Chou had always been one of the strongest opponents of Firefly, and Carter knew better than to try to argue with him. Apparently even coming over to say hello had been a mistake. "If you'll excuse me . . ."

Chou turned to face him. "Sorry. No real point in screaming about it now. But it wasn't necessary, you know. Fusion plants and solar power are quite adequate for Earth's needs."

"For now, sure. But what about the future? Even at the present rate of increase we would have a hard time building enough fusion plants to supply our needs by the turn of the century."

"The sun will still be there."

"Sure will," Carter nodded. "And did you know you'd need a billion and a half square kilometers of solar collectors to generate as much power as Firefly will? That's about three times the Earth's surface area, I believe. Excuse me please."

Carter went back to the control board, his annoyance at Chou evaporating quickly. Rossetti, chief operator, looked up. "The Secretary-General is just about finished, Doc," he said.

"Good. How are the collectors doing?"

"Seem to be okay. Firefly's throwing off a lot of particles, both charged and neutral, but most of them are being collected, or at least stopped. Efficiency for charges is hovering near eighty-five percent; heat exchangers about half that."

Carter nodded. Firefly — the black hole was almost universally called by the name of the project nowadays — was behaving as expected, losing its mass in a thermal spectrum that included both photons and subatomic particles. The fast-moving charged particles were no problem; a set of electromagnetic fields at the collector sphere slowed them down to safe speeds, simultaneously converting their kinetic energy into electric current. The x-rays and neutral particles were captured by a special multi-component liquid blanket, their energy absorbed as heat to be changed into electricity by more indirect means. And for the ultra-high-energy gamma rays that passed through the collectors as if they were tissue paper, there were ten meters of shielding.

Pity we can't use the neutrinos, too, Carter thought wryly. Firefly's temperature, he noted, was still increasing, and he hoped the Secretary-General's speech wouldn't take much longer.

A yellow light flashed twice. They were ready in the auditorium. "Okay, Rossetti. Fire when ready."

"Aye, aye, Admiral." Rossetti's hands moved over the controls as Carter watched the indicators. Kilometers away, the three massive DeVega accelerators came to life, sending narrow beams of neutrons directly into the tiny black hole. Firefly's radiation levels jumped as the gravitational energy of the falling neutrons began to reach the collectors. Rossetti carefully adjusted the flux levels and Firefly's temperature began to stabilize.

"That's it, Doc," Rossetti said at last. "Total neutron flux about ten to the

twenty-eighth per second; total Firefly luminosity one point six times ten to the eighteenth watts. Temperature holding near ten to the fifteenth degrees Kelvin. We've got steady state and she's running like a champ."

A loud cheer erupted in the control room, echoed, no doubt, in the auditorium. Someplace a cork popped loudly, accompanied by the steady hum of video cameras. Carter smiled for the reporters, his first real smile in weeks. After months of argument and back-breaking work, the closest thing to a total matter converter that mankind was ever likely to have was finally operational.

There were still things to be done, of course, but most of them were routine. He would first have to give a statement to the assembled dignitaries and cameras in the auditorium. Then came a check of the maser banks that would be beaming the energy to Earth and Luna, a quick trip to each of the DeVega accelerators to personally congratulate the operation crews there, and spot checks of other parts of the complex.

Five hours later he was finished, and he made a last stop back in the control room. "Any fluctuations in the plate potential?" he asked the dark-skinned man who had taken Rossetti's place at the main control board.

"No problems, Dr. Carter," Kapoor said, his gloomy face in marked contrast to the smiles worn by the rest of the Firefly Project staff today. "The black hole is holding position to a small fraction of a fermi, as nearly as we can tell."

Carter nodded satisfaction. The carefully-shaped electric field of the main plates was all that held the positively-charged black hole suspended in place at the focus of the three neutron beams. If it drifted even slightly the beams would miss the tiny object. "Anything else to report?"

"No, sir."

"Okay. Well, I'm off. See you in three weeks."

Kapoor glanced up. "You're going on vacation?"

"Theoretically, yes. Practically, it'll be one week of rest and two of speeches on Earth and Luna."

"It will be a nice change for you, anyway."

"Yes." Talking to Kapoor always depressed Carter a little. Something about the Indian's attitude seemed to indicate disapproval, although it was nothing you could put your finger on. As near as Carter could remember, Kapoor's geniality had evaporated during the Assembly's debates on a name for the project. It had come within a hair of being called *Shiva*, after the destroyer/regenerator of Hinduism, and Carter strongly suspected that Kapoor had considered even the suggestion to be sacrilegious. "Well, take care of the project, Kapoor," he said, a bit lamely, and left the room.

It could have been worse, Carter thought, walking down the hall. The Assembly had also considered the name *Lucifer*.

AS THINGS turned out, Carter was not away from Firefly for three weeks. He was gone for exactly fifty-eight hours, and the ship that returned him to the station was a big Patrol craft that made the trip in record time. No one aboard would tell him what was going on, but the message was painfully clear.

Something was terribly wrong at Firefly.

THE ENTIRE senior staff was assembled in the conference room when Carter arrived and slid into his usual chair. Nodding to the group, he turned to the Deputy Director and asked, "What's happened, Paul?"

Dr. Paul Rurik looked like he was next in line for a one-way tumbrel ride. "We may have a runaway on our hands. Ray."

Carter felt his hands tightening into fists under the table. "Fill me in."
Rurik touched a switch and a set of graphs appeared on one of the displays. "During last night's Owl shift Firefly's temperature started to rise. When we tried to restabilize this morning we discovered we couldn't do so. We tried everything we could think of and then sent the Patrol to get you."

"Who was the operator last night?"

"I was, Doctor," a young man spoke up, a slight quaver in his voice.

"It wasn't Galton's fault," Rurik said. "The temperatures were within the allowable range we've calculated."

Carter nodded heavily. An operator couldn't be expected to notice that the rate of temperature increase was not following the theoretical curve. Only one of the scientists like Rurik or himself would have had the necessary knowledge.

Rurik went on, "I suspect Firefly drifted a little out of place, causing one or more of the neutron beams to miss it."

"No." Carter pointed to a display. "If that had happened you'd have gotten a big energy jump in the heat exchanger directly across from the beam that's missing. Instead, that extra neutron flux is spread out over several exchangers; furthermore, it's happening for all three beams. The beams aren't missing — they're being deflected."

"How?"

Carter looked toward the voice in surprise. "What are you doing here, Senator?"

"I was still here at Firefly when the crisis occurred," Chou said. "It is my right to be kept informed. How are the neutrons being deflected, Doctor?"

"Firefly emits particles in a thermal spectrum," Carter explained. "That means there are some at every speed from zero to near lightspeed. The ones that are moving slowly tend to stay near the black hole, forming a sort of cloud around it, and it's this cloud that's deflecting the beams."

"Surely they can't change the beam directions very much," Chou argued.

"They don't have to," Rurik put in. "Firefly is much smaller than the neutrons themselves. But, Ray, we took that effect into account when we set our temperature limits."

"I know. All I can think of is that our subatomic particle theory must be wrong somehow. If there are some particles coming out of Firefly that we haven't taken into account, all of our temperature curve calculations will be off."

"Hell cubed," Rurik muttered under his breath. "I'll get the theory people on this right away. Maybe with the extra particle emission data Firefly's giving them they can figure out where we're going wrong."

"For the moment, that won't help us," Carter said. "What we have to do is get more mass into Firefly, and that as soon as possible. The hotter it gets, the denser that particle cloud becomes. Not much, since most of the particles emitted have high kinetic energies, but even a slight increase in the number of low-energy particles just makes things worse. What have we got that we can throw at the black hole?"

"We have a spare DeVega accelerator," Rossetti volunteered, "but I don't think that'll help any."

"Why not?" Senator Chou asked. "That would give you an extra neutron beam."

For an instant Carter had an overpowering urge to tell the Senator to shut up. None of them had the time to explain things to a layman. "DeVega dipole accelerators require very tricky and sensitive electromagnetic fields to function. On a ring the diameter of the accelerator platform we can place only three DeVegas, spaced one hundred twenty degrees apart. Any closer and their

fields would interfere with each other."

"What about putting the extra accelerator farther out from the center?" Chou persisted.

"At the distance we'd need the beam would spread out too much to be useful. And before you ask, directly above and below Firefly are the charged plates that hold it in place, so we can't run a neutron beam through there. Paul, can we increase present flux any?"

"No way. We're already running them ten percent above spec maximum, though I don't know how long they can hold that. We may in fact have stopped the runaway — the temperature is changing so slowly now we can't tell if it's going up or down."

"Let's assume it's still going up," Carter said. "Anything else we can use?"

"We've got a few X-ray lasers," someone said. "They could be set up to fire at Firefly."

"I've already checked that," Rossetti said. "It won't give a significant mass increment, and might add an extra scattering component to the neutron beams."

"Sir?" Galton spoke up hesitantly. "I may have an idea."

"Spit it out, son," Rurik said brusquely. "This is no time to be shy."

Carter winced at the tone as Galton blushed slightly. The young man's reticence was clearly not shyness, but instead the result of guilt feelings over his part in this mess. Rurik had never been good at understanding human emotion, though. He had declared that the fault was not Galton's and, for him, that ended the subject. It would never occur to him that Galton might still be upset.

"Sir, the DeVegas will accelerate any neutral particle that has a reasonable dipole moment. If we used, say, iron atoms instead of neutrons, we might be able to reverse the runaway."

Rurik nodded slowly. "That might just work, Galton. You'll probably get fewer hits on Firefly because of heightened beam self-interference diffusion, but the ones that go in are fifty-six times more massive. And they'll be deflected less by that particle cloud around Firefly." He looked at Carter inquiringly.

"It's worth a try," Carter agreed. "Anyone know how long it would take to switch beam materials?"

"I checked, sir," Galton said. "The beam would only have to be off for ten minutes. And there's enough spare iron around for about ten hours of operation."

"If we can't reverse the runaway in that time we'll have to try something else, anyway." But to have the beams off for even ten minutes might prove disastrous. Carter weighed the options briefly, painfully aware of the need for speed. "All right. Galton, get the DeVega crews together and brief them. We'll switch just one accelerator for now — make it Beta. If it helps, we'll do the other two a little later. Paul, I suggest you get the control room people ready for the switch-over. The rest of you go to your Emergency posts — I want to be ready if any problems crop up. Get to it."

There was a mad scramble for the door, but as Carter turned to leave he found his way barred by Senator Chou. "Dr. Carter, a word with you, please."

"I'll be up in a minute," Carter called to Rurik over Chou's shoulder. Rurik nodded and glided from the room, not bothering to use his velcro shoes. "What is it, Senator?" Carter said when the others had gone. "Make it fast, please. I'm in a hurry."

"What are our chances of stopping it, do you think?"

"Is that what you wanted? I have no idea. You'll just have to wait until the rest of us know."

"I can't wait for certainties — probabilities must do for now. I have a duty to

the people of Earth. If anything goes wrong here we will have to begin taking steps to protect them, and the sooner we start the fewer will have to die."

Carter looked at Chou with new insight. For the past several months he had seen the Senator as simply an opponent, a cardboard cutout violently and irrationally opposed to the Firefly Project. Now, suddenly, Carter saw him as a human being. "You really care about Earth, don't you?" he said softly.

"It's my profession to care, Doctor. You may recall that I wanted the black hole placed a good distance further from Earth, where it would have been less of a danger to both the planet and the Space Colonies. I am not anti-technology, despite your side's efforts to paint me so, but I wished for a larger safety factor."

"Senator, there wasn't a decent safety factor available. If we can't stop the runaway, Earth has had it no matter where Firefly is."

"I don't understand."

Carter took a deep breath. "If we can't stabilize Firefly's temperature, it will keep getting hotter and hotter. The hotter it gets, the faster it radiates its mass as energy until it basically explodes. According to current theory, in the last tenth second of its existence it will radiate with one percent of the sun's total power output."

Chou's eyes were very wide. "Good Lord! And you allowed this — this *nova* to be placed in Earth orbit? You must be insane!"

"Senator, if Firefly lets go *anywhere* in the solar system Earth is finished. The sun will go crazy with all that extra radiation hitting it. If the extra solar heat doesn't sterilize the inner system, the extra radiation will. But we had no real choice in the matter. I don't think more than a handful of people realize this, but if we had just ignored the black hole from the very beginning the same thing probably would have happened. Firefly was already too close to blowing. We didn't deliberately put Earth in danger, Senator; we were trying very hard to save it. And we still are. Excuse me, but I have to get to the control room."

IT WAS AN hour later before Carter was satisfied that the DeVega accelerator crews had the technique down well enough to be able to switch beam materials in the shortest possible time. The Project's chief design engineer, Felix Mahler, floated by Carter's shoulder as the control room personnel waited for word that the changeover had been completed.

"Santos and Trumbell are the best techs I've got," Mahler said into the brittle silence as the minutes ticked by. "If anyone can get the DeVegas going in ten minutes it's them. Matter of fact, Ray, I'll bet you they'll do it in nine."

The speaker crackled. "Beta station; Santos. We're ready here."

Rossetti, at the control board, didn't wait for Carter's nod. "Firing," he said.

"Eight and a half," Mahler muttered to no one in particular. "They're better than I thought."

Carter smiled slightly, but it was an automatic response. His full attention was on the meters that gave Firefly's luminosity and temperature, both of which had been running. The indicators jumped wildly, as always happened when a new beam was brought to strength, and Carter's heart rate jerked in sympathetic response.

"Beam's steadying down," Rossetti muttered.

"How's it look?"

"It's hard to say, Doc. We're getting extra power just from the gravitational energy effects — since the iron atoms are heavier than neutrons — and that's fouling all our calibrations." Rossetti stared hard at the temperature indicator. "If Firefly's cooling down I can't tell from this. Not yet, anyway."

"We could shift the feed on the other DeVegas," Mahler suggested. "That

would make any temperature change more visible."

"I'd rather not risk shutting off the neutron beams for the time that would take," Carter said. "Not until we're sure it'll do us any good. Let's give this an hour or so and see what happens."

THE RESULTS after two hours were very clear. Firefly's temperature was still increasing.

"Damn!" Carter muttered through clenched teeth. "It's got to work. Galton's numbers prove that. What's going wrong?"

He threw a glance around the room, a glare brimming with frustration that most of the others seemed to interpret as fury. "I've looked over Galton's work, Ray," Rurik spoke up with some hesitation. "I can only think of one effect that hasn't been taken into account."

"Well?"

"We're dealing with iron atoms here, much larger than neutrons, and with electron clouds at — relatively — great distances. As the atoms approach Firefly, the first things to be swallowed will be an electron or two, which will leave the atom with a net positive charge. Since the black hole is also positive, the atom — the ion, now — will be deflected slightly before the nucleus gets to Firefly."

"And some of the shots that would otherwise have hit don't make it in," Carter growled. "Makes sense. Unfortunately. Is it worth switching the other two beams, do you think?"

"I doubt it. We'd gain a little, maybe, but most of that would be offset by the losses while the DeVegas are being altered."

"Doc, would it help to run the beams faster?" Rossetti asked. "If the time interval between ionization and contact was smaller, the atoms wouldn't be deflected as far."

Carter looked at Mahler and raised his eyebrows. "Possible?"

"Sorry. These DeVegas were specially designed to deliver high particle currents, and for technical reasons we can't boost the velocities any higher than they are now."

There was a moment of silence. Then Kapoor's soft voice broke into the others' thoughts. "Dr. Carter, are you going to switch back to a neutron beam?"

"Why? The iron atoms aren't doing any worse than the neutrons are and we'd just lose ten more minutes of beam during switchover."

"It seemed to me, sir, that if the black hole is absorbing one or two electrons from even those atoms which are deflected —"

Kapoor never got to finish his sentence. "My God!" Rurik exploded. "He's right, Ray. We've got to change that beam, fast."

"Right." Carter had caught Kapoor's drift at the same time Rurik had, and his heart was pounding violently in his ears. "Felix, get your men on that beam, now."

Mahler was already talking urgently into his intercom.

"I don't understand, Dr. Carter," Senator Chou murmured from his left.

Carter turned to face him. "The only thing that keeps Firefly in place is the electric field from the main plates, and for that to work Firefly has to have a heavy positive charge. Each extra electron that goes in cancels one of those charges. If the charge goes down to zero, we'll have no way of holding Firefly in the neutron beams."

"You couldn't recapture it?"



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"Not in time. Possibly not at all."

Mahler looked up. "Okay, Ray, Beta's down again. Santos and Trumbell will have it running with neutrons in a few minutes."

"And I've just talked to the control room," Rossetti added. Firefly's still holding positive charge, well within safety limits."

Rurik leaned back in his chair. "We were lucky," he muttered to no one in particular.

"Yes," Carter agreed. He took a deep breath and let it out slowly before continuing. "Gentlemen, we still have a crisis on our hands. We have got to find a way to get more mass into Firefly. Suggestions?"

There was a long silence. "I don't suppose it would help to enclose Firefly in degenerate matter of some kind," Rossetti said hesitantly.

Rurik shook his head. "We'd need better than neutron star density to make any headway — and even if we could make material like that we'd never get it near Firefly. The thing's just too hot."

Mahler looked up from a tablet he'd been writing on. "Whatever we're going to do, we have to do it fast," he announced quietly. "At the current rate of temperature increase, Firefly's radiation pressure will soon match the driving force behind the neutron beams. When that happens the DeVegas are, for all practical purposes, useless."

Carter had to force the words out. "How long?"

"Sixty hours. Maybe sixty-five."

Someone muttered a shocked obscenity. Carter felt his stomach trying to curl up and die. Sixty hours! His eyes swept the room of their own volition, as if looking for a way out, and finally came to rest on Kapoor's abnormally pale face. The Indian had been right to be so gloomy, Carter thought, feeling strangely lightheaded. It had been sheer folly to suppose mankind could tame even a tiny black hole. They might as well have tried to hitch a tiger to a plow . . .

With a physical effort Carter shook the vertigo from his mind. He couldn't afford to go to pieces. "All right," he said. "You all know what that means. I want some ideas and some solutions. For starters —" he looked at Mahler — "I want the spare DeVega set up as close to the accelerator ring as possible." He raised a hand as the other started to object. "I know, at that distance it won't help much. But we need anything we can get, and it may at least buy us some time. Punch some holes in the shielding and collector sphere to let the beam through."

"Right." Mahler scribbled a note. "I'll get a crew on it right now." Sliding his chair back, the engineer launched himself through the door.

"I'm calling a recess," Carter said to the others. "We'll meet back here in an hour."

Carter remained in his chair until the others had left, staring at the table as he gently kneaded his temples with his fingertips.

"You look tired. You'd better get some sleep."

Carter looked up in surprise. "I thought you'd left with the others, Senator."

Chou shook his head, his eyes never leaving Carter's face. "I meant what I said about sleep, Doctor."

"Can't afford the time." He smiled wanly. "Why the sudden solicitude? I thought you didn't like me."

"My likes or dislikes are of complete unimportance," Chou replied. "If anyone can come up with the solution we need, it will probably be you, and we can't afford to let your intellect break down from fatigue."

Even to himself, Carter's laugh sounded hollow. "Some intellect. I wasted

several badly needed hours with the iron atom fiasco, and damn near lost our control of Firefly in the bargain. I tell you, Senator, if we're relying on me, we might as well quit now."

Chou was silent for a moment. "If we can't stop this, how long do we have?"

"Until the explosion? A year, probably. If our theory is right, that is; if it isn't I have no idea. Of course, Firefly will be far too hot to approach long before that."

"Dr. Carter . . . can we stop Firefly?"

Carter shook his head slowly. "I can't see any way to do it. No way at all. My God, Senator, what's going to happen to all those people?"

"We won't be able to evacuate them in time. Besides, where would they go? Ceres and Hestia can't absorb any excess population. Maybe we can tow the Space Colonies out of Earth orbit into the asteroid belt; they should be able to survive out there." Chou shook his head, his face a mirror of horror and pain. "But Earth has no chance."

"No."

Chou looked up. Carter avoided his eyes. "The blame is not yours, Doctor," the Senator said. "We — mankind's leaders — made the final decision on Firefly. Ours is the responsibility. Not that laying blame helps any." He sighed. "Ironical, isn't it? For the past three centuries we have been continually worried about running out of energy, but now the final crisis arrives in the form of too much energy."

Something brushed the edge of Carter's mind. "Say that last again, will you?"

"What? I just said our final crisis was too much energy, whereas in the past —"

"Too much. Too much." Suddenly the fatigue was gone, dislodged from his mind by a maelstrom of new thoughts and ideas. Fumbling out his intercom, he keyed for general 'cast. "This is Carter. All senior staff, report to conference immediately."

"Dr. Carter . . . ?"

Carter glanced up and smiled slightly at the Senator's uneasy expression. "Don't worry, I haven't crossed my circuits; at least, not yet. You just reminded me that there are two sides to this problem and we've been ignoring one of them. Excuse me now, I have to think."

He was still scribbling on a pad when the others arrived and took their places. "All right," he said. "First of all, has anyone else come up with anything?"

No one spoke, but Carter could feel the drop in tension throughout the room as they realized there was a hidden promise in his question. "I don't guarantee this," he warned them, "but see what you think. So far we've been concentrating on getting more mass into Firefly. Maybe we can hit the problem from the other direction; namely, to decrease the density of the particle cloud that's keeping the neutrons out in the first place."

"But it's not like a real, stationary cloud," Rurik objected. "It's self-regenerating, more on the order of a bathtub with a faucet at one end and a drain at the other."

"Exactly. So we're going to enlarge the drain. What is the cloud composed of, gentlemen?"

"Subatomic particles," Galton said. "Positive and neutral, mostly."

"Right," Carter agreed. "Why no negative ones? Because the positive plates that hold Firefly itself in place rip away any negatives as soon as they're formed. Conversely, the plates tend to keep the positives near Firefly. The neutrals don't care either way." He handed a sketch to Mahler. "Felix, I propose setting up a pair of negatively charged plates a few meters from Firefly and where they won't block the neutron beams. What I want is to set up an extra electric field

that will pull the positive particles away from Firefly without risking moving the black hole itself. Can it be done?"

Mahler frowned at the sketch for a moment. "It'll be tricky," he said. "Any extra charge near Firefly will change the field of the main plates. What we need is stable equilibrium right at Firefly's position and a small non-zero field a few angstroms away. We'll probably need curved electrodes of some kind; the computer can figure the shape for us."

"But be damn careful with that field," Rurik spoke up. "The black hole has got to be at a stable equilibrium point or we'll lose it."

"I'll set up the programming myself," Mahler said, making notes beside Carter's sketch.

"Doc, what about the neutral particles?" Rossetti asked.

"I think we're stuck with them," Carter admitted. "But if we can decrease the density of positives even a little it may be enough." The excitement he had felt a few minutes before was wearing off and fatigue was beginning to pull at him. It was an effort to continue speaking. "If there are no further questions let's get to work. Felix, get those plates designed and built as soon as possible. The rest of you assist him or stay out of his way. That's all, then. Paul, I'll meet you in the control room in a few minutes."

Carter had intended only to rest his eyes for a moment before rejoining the others. It was with some shock, therefore, that he dragged himself from a nightmarish dream two hours later to find himself still sitting at the deserted conference room table. Blinking the sleep from his eyes, he pulled out his intercom. "Carter to control room," he said thickly.

"Rurik here, Ray."

"What's going on up there? Why did you let me sleep this long?"

"We thought you needed the rest. The new electrodes have been made and tested, and Galton and Telemann have just about got them in place. There's nothing you need to do for at least a couple of more hours. Why don't you go back to sleep?"

"In a minute." Sleep was beginning to fog his brain again, but what he had to say was vital. "Paul, when they're finished out there I want you to set up those X-ray lasers to fire at Firefly."

"But the photons don't carry enough mass to make any real difference. Remember?"

"Don't care about the mass. The x-ray photons will get trapped into orbits around Firefly, either spiraling in or being absorbed by particles in the cloud. Most of those particles will be neutrals, since we're pulling away the others. Any particle that absorbs a photon will gain its kinetic energy and momentum."

"I understand," Rurik nodded excitedly. "The neutrals will tend to move away from the black hole faster. Just like heating up a gas and making it expand, really."

"Right. I admit it'll be a small effect — Firefly's own x-ray output is heating up that particle cloud far more than our lasers could ever hope to — but it may be worth doing, anyway."

"Agreed. We'll get on that right away."

Deep in Carter's subconscious the decision was made that he had done all that he could and that Firefly's fate was now in the hands of the universe. He barely managed to turn off his intercom before he was once more deeply asleep.

IT WAS ANOTHER four hours before he again awoke. This time he had the strength to go to the control room. One look at the meters was enough. "We

did it," he murmured, half to himself.

Rurik swiveled in his seat at the main board. "You're awake," he said unnecessarily. "Yes, thanks to you. Firefly's temperature is dropping steadily. We've already cut the DeVegas back to safe flux levels, and will probably be able to shut off that extra field soon. Just as well, since the two electrodes are in pretty bad shape already from radiation damage."

"That reminds me. Did you tell me Galton was helping to install the new plates?"

Rurik lowered his eyes. "He insisted on going. I think he felt — well, responsible for the runaway."

"He's an operator, not a tech," Carter growled. "He had no business going out there." He looked around the room. "Where is he, anyway?"

There was along moment of silence. Then Rossetti spoke up quietly. "He and Telemann are both in intensive care, Doc. Severe radiation burns. They're not sure either will make it."

Carter stared at him, a cold fist squeezing his heart. "Oh, God. I never even thought of that."

"They knew the risk," Rurik said. "They also knew it had to be done."

"A high price to pay, but it bought the lives of Earth's billions," Senator Chou added.

Carter turned to face him, anguish turning to unreasoning fury. "And I guess that's what matters to you, isn't it? That and closing down the Firefly Project. Well, you've got plenty of new ammunition now, don't you? So go ahead — tell the Council, hold your news conference, and get everyone screaming for the Project to be shut down. Then what are you going to do, demand we put as much mass as we can into Firefly and try to push it out of the system before it blows? — never mind that that's more dangerous than keeping it here."

He stopped, out of breath. In a quiet voice the Senator said, "The Council must be told, certainly. But there will be no news conference. The people of Earth must never know what almost happened."

The anger and frustration rising within Carter vanished at the unexpected answer. He stared hard at Chou, a dozen questions swarming through his mind. Only one got out: "Why?"

"Because you were right, Doctor. I've spend some time in the last few hours studying the figures. Without Firefly Earth would spend nearly eight percent of its resources over the next four decades in building new energy supplies, and we just can't afford that. There are too many problems that will take our full attention to solve. Like it or not, we need Firefly." He waved toward the control board. "Oh, I will push strongly for more safety precautions — running Firefly at a lower temperature, for example. But you have proved that the black hole can be handled, with the right man in charge." He must have seen something in Carter's face, for his eyes narrowed slightly. "You do want to stay, don't you?"

Carter turned toward the port, looking through it as if he could see through the shielding and collectors at the impossibly brilliant pinprick in space that was Firefly. Once he had seen it as a servant, even a friend. But it had turned on him once, and he would never again be able to look upon it without knowing the acrid taste of fear.

He took a deep breath. "I'll have to think about it," he said. ●

Timothy Zahn

Born in Chicago, I grew up in what was then one of the less built-up western suburbs. Science fiction made up a good part of my early reading, as did books on subjects like science and mythology. A short hiatus in my sf interest was ended by a high-school friend whose interests included sf, Ravi Shankar, and four-dimensional tick-tack-toe-tock-tuck (you need five in a row, and, yes it is possible to build a board for the game).

I went on to earn degrees in physics from Michigan State and the University of Illinois. I had been drawing detailed sf pictures as a hobby for years before I finally thought to write down some of the stories that went with the drawings. I did, discovered I enjoyed doing it, and have been at it ever since.



THE SPACEMAN'S EPITAPH

To fly a ship, my greatest dream, is finally fulfilled.
To see the stars in silent grace, their majesty unfurled.
The secrets of the universe lie just beyond my hand.
a pitch, a yaw, a roll away, for I am in command.
It matters not the engines dead, the crew in final slumber,
we sought but knowledge on this trip not planets we could plunder.
Fly farther out than man before, into the last frontier.
Send data back so those on Earth at last can pioneer.
The ship flies on through out all time into the endless sky.
With it goes man's greatest thirst, the question that asks why.
My final breath shall come too soon here in the void of space,
for even now I feel the hand of God upon my face.

—Kurt von Stuckrad

Kendall Evans

POISED IN SPACE, the starship *Enterprising* drifted toward the great pit of darkness that greedily consumed space and matter — and perhaps time itself. It was at once the most formidable and enigmatic natural phenomenon in the universe: a black hole. And it hovered, an immense dimensionless nothingness, in the viewscreens of the *Enterprising*.

Aboard the *Enterprising*, Captain Burke Fulhardy stood stoically and steadfastly in his usual position upon the bridge. His eyes were pulled time and again toward the viewscreens.

What he seemed to see was a multicolored vortex. He had to remind himself that it was a three-dimensional vortex — it would look exactly the same from any direction. Interstellar gasses, drawn constantly down into the gravity well of the black hole, fluoresced in response to X-rays emitted by tortured matter nearing the collapsar's event horizon. Thus the black central mass was surrounded by tenuous veils of color: glowing bluish scarves; vast reddish streamers; translucent purple swaths.

The impressive sight filled him with awe — and also made him feel a little like prey hypnotized by the presence of a hungry predator.

Oddly enough, he probably would not have been present to witness this natural wonder were it not the size and shape of his ears. It was a little-known truth (since he kept it to himself) that Burke had become a space captain as a result of his protruding ears. A streak of stubborn vanity had prevented him from purchasing cosmetic surgery — but as a result he was extremely self-conscious with women. He had settled for dedicating himself to his career with Space Fleet as an alternative.

Now, before speaking, he paused to look around at his motley crew. There, dutifully attentive as always, sat Cavendish. At his side the good-natured robot C43BO. Stoker, the crew's token Black, at the radio. Sebasto, the Hamner, preening his exotic alien feathers. And everywhere — *Gripples*. Although the *Gripples* were not, technically, a part of the crew.

"We find ourselves involved in what may well be the greatest of human experiences," Captain Burke said portentously. "Ours is a singular mission, indeed — for we are on the brink of entering a singularity."

"Very much on the brink, Captain," advised Cavendish. "We're rapidly closing with the event horizon." Cavendish was the navigator, a beautiful blonde Amazon with classic features and figure. Not only that, reflected Captain Burke — but she didn't seem to mind his protruding ears.

"We're going to make history," Doc said, wide-eyed. "That is, if we don't die trying. If there is something on the far side of the black hole, if the collapsar really is a doorway to some other realm or dimension, then by Godot we'll find out what it is. And we'll be the first."

The Captain's concentration faltered as he felt several sudden pulses of raw terror. He had to remind himself that the source was external. The alien *Gripples* were frightened, and their telepathic fright was somewhat contagious.

Stellar Trek

LOG 72: BEYOND THE BLACK HOLE

The Gripples looked like nothing so much as fur-covered beach balls. And not for the first time the Captain reflected that they were more trouble than they were worth. They had the ability to cling to any surface, vertical or horizontal — walls, floors, or ceilings — and thus the name Gripples. But, annoying telepathic powers aside, there was one big gripe with Gripples: they multiplied like microbes. The crew of the *Enterprising* had rescued one of the not-too-bright creatures from an asteroid. Reproducing by binary fission, much like an amoeba, the single Gripple had caused a population explosion aboard the *Enterprising*.

But the Gripples weren't important at a time like this; the Captain's thoughts were drawn back down into the raging pit of the mysterious collapsar ...

... Encroaching darkness, surrounded by collapsing matter radiating all color of the spectrum. But now, as they rapidly approached, their rockets stilled as they rode the gravity waves downward — the brilliant colors were forced to the periphery of the screen and superseded all.

Another screen also provided an image of the collapsar, but in a much different fashion: lines like the lines on a topographical map portrayed the sphere of the black hole in terms of gravitic waves — in this case an extremely tight network of lines to indicate the incomprehensible density of gravity. His attention momentarily captured by the second screen, Burke thought: *it looks as if God or demon were playing games with an infinite and infinitely flexible sheet of graph paper.*

Were it not for the gravity-nullifying field which surrounded the *Enterprising*, shielding the vessel from forces raging just beyond her hull, the starship would have long since fragmented.

"I know it's our mission to boldly go where no man has gone," commented Communications Officer Stoker, "but I still think this is ridiculous."

"Keep your morale up, Stoker," said the Captain. "It's just the spillover of telepathic fear from the Gripples that's getting you down."

"No, sir, I'm confident this is my own fear."

"Well keep your morale up anyway. And that's an order," Burke said, not liking Stoker's defiant tone. There's nothing worse, he thought, than a defiant whine.

"Captain," warned Cavendish. "The event horizon. We're fifteen seconds away and counting ..." And she began her countdown to the accompaniment of computerized bleeps: "Ten ... nine ... eight ..."

Despite the extremity of the situation, Burke allowed himself an instant to admire Cavendish's calm confidence, her sonorous voice. And also her curvacious legs and generous cleavage, as revealed by the severe cut of microskirt/minitunic — standard regulation spacegarb for women in Space Fleet.

— But then they were beyond, past the boundary of the event horizon, and surrounded by a darkness so absolute that Fulhardy felt as if everything, all light and existence, had been eclipsed.

The ship's power adjusted and the lights inside brightened. But the screens remained absolutely dark, absolutely dimensionless.

"We're still alive," someone said, amazement in the tone.

Captain Burke let out the breath he had been holding without conscious intent.

"We've done it!" Stoker exclaimed. "We're the first human beings to journey beyond a black hole! Three cheers!"

And in unison, the motley-looking crew gave vent to several hip-hip-horrays.

The Gripples chimed in telepathically. Captain Fulhardy thought, however, that the others' voices still sounded a bit strained. They weren't safe yet. They were lost in the unknown. Were they still within the compass of the black hole, or had they actually passed beyond, arriving at some other place? And if they had entered a foreign universe, would they even comprehend its physical laws?

The screens of the great interstellar vessel looked dead; depicted a darkness more vast and absolute than that of interstellar space.

But gradually the fathomless black softened to reveal dancing bluish illumination.

"If I didn't know better," said the robot C43BO, "I'd swear we were beneath the sea. However, such a possibility just does not compute." C43BO was the Captain's faithful robot sidekick. He was easily the most stable member of the crew, and especially valuable lately because he was immune to the telepathic distortions generated by the Gripples. C43BO was an excellent chess player and also a connoisseur of fine wines.

"It must be an illusion," Captain Burke said uncertainly.

Just then, a fish swam past in the viewscreen.

"Good Lord!"

"Captain," complained Cavendish, "we really are underwater."

"I can see that, Cavendish. I even recognized the species of that fish that went past. A *Neothunnus allisoni*, I believe."

"Tuna," translated C43BO.

"That's ridiculous, Captain," commented Stoker. "That would mean we were back on Earth."

"Yes. Absurd situation for an interstellar vessel, wouldn't you agree?"

The *Enterprising* was not constructed to land upon a planet; smaller on-board shuttles were designed for that task. The immense ship was created to inhabit only the gravityless starlit vacuum of deep space.

Sunlight danced upon her viewscreen as the *Enterprising* floated to the surface. Although the ship rocked and swayed, artificial gravity compensated. But the visual information was enough to make Captain Burke experience a momentary nausea. As the ship stabilized, the viewscreen provided a view of two worlds: sky above and sea below the bisecting, fluctuating line of the ocean's surface.

"That blue sky looks damnably familiar. Get me some readings." Captain Burke felt irritable. A sense of disappointment plagued him. Was this all there was to it? Journey through a black hole and end up on an ordinary looking planet?

In response to his orders, the crew hunched dutifully over screens; energetically punched buttons. He had a suspicion that several of them were merely doing their best to look busy.

"The air is breathable, 100 percent earth-norm, exactly the right percentages of nitrogen, oxygen, argon and smog. This *must* be Earth, Captain."

Cavendish interrupted: "I've got a fix on our location, Captain. Latitude 36 degrees 25 minutes North, longitude 62 degrees 80 minutes West."

Sebasto deftly lifted off his custom earphones, consulting a smaller screen which displayed a map of the Earth. "Say, that's your world's famous Bermuda Triangle!"

Captain Burke Fulhardy considered a moment, abstractedly fingering a stray whisker near his Adam's apple. Finally he commented: "I guess we came in through the back door." ●

Kendall Evans

Kendall Evans was born January 10, 1947 in Berkeley, California. He began writing science fiction and fantasy at the age of 12. In 1968, while attending college, he married Lee Vivian Evans (nee Johnson), who also writes science fiction. After a crash savings program which lasted 1½ years (no television, no telephone, etc.) the two of them spent the summer of 1969 traveling Europe.

The author is a graduate of California State College at Long Beach, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English. His stories have appeared in *FANTASTIC* (the May 1974 and May 1976 issues) and in the S.F. anthology *ALIEN WORLDS*

(1979, edited by Paul Collins.) He is currently employed with Pacific International Enterprises, Inc., a motion picture production and distribution company, handling promotion/publicity for the film "WINDWALKER," starring famed British actor Trevor Howard and directed by Oscar winner Keith Merrill.

After living more than thirty years in Southern California, the author now resides with his wife and family (including his identical twin daughters, aged 4½ years) in Ashland, Oregon. His hobbies include back-packing, tennis, chess, and writing biographical sketches of questionable authenticity.

A ROOM IN THE CITY

In a corner of
the cityplex of Boswash,
there is a room, a tiny room
scarcely enough for a statistical person
and half.

Non standard prints of unsafe shades
and unsettling themes cover the walls
A tape player drowns out the sound
of subliminal music with an
antique tape of a new-born calf.

The statistical person makes a
private universe out of his room.
He/she/it awaits the coming
of thought police with a laugh

—Scott E. Green

**ADDRESSEE
UNKNOWN...**



**Michael
Kube-McDowell**

CARL HEGAN stepped out of the teleporter in MN 56537 with the unfamiliar transport fatigue handicapping his movements. The tiredness was temporary, he had been promised, and in any case a small price to pay. A sunglider hop from CA 94704 would have taken a cramped and crowded eighteen hours.

"Besides," he thought, "if the Corporation finally thinks I'm worth the higher tariff, who am I to say I'm not?"

Yet to judge by the port office in which he found himself, he had in fact been demoted. A one-room, one-pad operation such as this could only exist in this sort of superannuated Midwestern backwater. He noted a sign proclaiming, "Home of the World's Largest Otter," and turned away to hide his mirth as the portmaster approached.

"Fergus Falls," he thought disdainfully, surrendering his ID packet and stepping into the med scanner. "No wonder they called for outside help."

Hegan's orders had reached him two days earlier, appearing on his com screen just as he stepped into his bayfront apartment and out of the CA sun. Hegan froze it there while arranging for an evening companion ("A blonde who can play chess, please"), then brought it back for study.

"Your synthoanalytic skills are now required at a new location. Inconsistencies in consumer buying patterns have hardened into a t-probability trend, the cause of which must be identified. Long-term planning has been suspended pending. Expect to spend 100 days or more; full data available on your arrival in MN. Travel and lodging arrangements follow."

It was very Corporation; straightforward, impersonal, anxious over the Future of the Species. But then, that was their job. When the energy clockspring that drove the industrial world had run down—some preferred to say stuck—it had done so in a hurry. Only one organization had had the combination of assets needed to weld together the mishmash of governments that arose across the continent—the energy-efficient communications, the data-processing ability, the satellite experience. The Corporation watched with great sense of purpose and little humor over a society in stasis, providing the kind of close control that permitted it to exist at all.

It was not part of the government, but it might as well have been.

Hegan stepped out of the med scanner as the final precautionary test was completed. He wondered at the two guards who had appeared by the exit, their weapons unslung but at rest. Bodyguards? Escort? Surely that wasn't neces-

sary here . . .

The portmaster approached Hegan before he had time to consider it further. "Mr. Hegan, I'm afraid there's a problem."

"Something show up in the tests?" Hegan was instantly concerned. Misassembly by the teleporter was rare, but always serious.

"No, they're in order, to five decimal places. What you have, I'm afraid, is a credentials problem. Although I'm sure there's a simple solution, MN Central won't confirm your travel permit."

Hegan cursed silently, his thoughts sprinkled with the word, "hick." "Why was it rejected? Some credit that they claim I left unpaid?"

"No—no, it's not that."

"A civil problem, then—"

"No, no. In fact, I didn't say your permit was rejected at all. It's really quite odd—been here fifteen years and never saw nor heard of it. MN Central has no records of you. Here—see for yourself."

Hegan took the proffered printout. Below his name and numbers were the words, "No such citizen registered. Please reconfirm identification number."

"That's my number," Hegan said. "How can this be?"

The portmaster scratched his chin. "I'd say, delay in records transfer. Don't know why, though—usually simultaneous."

"Have you called CA Central? Or the port office in '704?"

"We're doing everything possible," the portmaster crooned reassuringly. "In the meantime, you're going to get a chance to rest up from your trip. Since your identification is in question, I have to deal with you under the Alien Control Laws. You'll have to wait in our detention center until this is cleared up. I am sorry to inconvenience you, but I have no choice. No choice at all."

Aggrieved, Hegan saw no other choice but to quietly go with the officers. After asking for and being denied his identification packet, Hegan walked out to the waiting car and clambered in the back.

"Cozy?" the driver asked, climbing in.

Hegan nodded, and the driver turned on the security field to hold Hegan motionless.

The ride was short and ended outside a low, dark building. "Can I call the Corporation?"

"When we get inside," the driver said curtly. A few moments later he guided Hegan to a private booth.

"Priority call," Hegan said into the 'phone.

"Go ahead."

"688-63-6733 to Corporation Midwest Operator."

The line hummed busily, then was silent.

"We're sorry," said an asexual voice, "we cannot complete your call. Please check your number and try again, or obtain assistance from an operator."

Hegan shook his head, disgruntled, and tried a normal call. The result was the same.

"Operator."

"Yes?"

"I can't seem to complete my call."

"Your number and the number you're dialing?"

Hegan supplied them.

"I'm sorry, my records show no available credit under that number. Would you please repeat your ID number so that I may double-check?"

"Terrific," Hegan muttered.

"Excuse me?"

"Forget it." Hegan stepped out of the booth. "I can't get through," he said to the waiting officer. "My credit is fouled up, too. Can I call on the police account?"

"Tell you what," the officer said. "You fill out this info sheet. We'll forward the data to the records people at Central and let them take it from there. Then we'll go into the ID lab and see what we can come up with."

"Any word from the portmaster?"

"The word is 'no'. CA Central had nothing on you—not a byte. You're our problem now."

Hegan coded the computer form quickly, and then followed the officers to the lab—a small, cluttered room with some unfamiliar equipment surrounding an aging comp terminal. The trooper took alpha tracings, retinagraphs, voice-prints, even fingerprints.

"Ever been cloned?" he asked. "We could take a cell sample and send it for a chromosome analysis."

"No," Hegan said. "How long will this take?"

As if in response, the terminal began chattering. The nearest officer leaned over and read the hard copy as it came out.

"Looks like you'll get some personal attention, anyway. Records is going to send an adjustor over."

"Hegan was relieved. "How soon?"

"Doesn't say."

"What about that other stuff—the tests? When will you hear?"

"Soon."

"What about that call?"

"Let's wait for the adjuster, right?"

The cell was cool, clean and featured the latest in electroshock forcefields. Hegan stretched out on the bunk and considered the time that had already been wasted. "I should have flown," he said aloud.

Before long one of the officers stopped by the cell.

"Just wanted you to know you're now under arrest."

Hegan jumped up, indignant. "For what?"

"Illegal travel, impersonation of a Corporation field representative, several violations of identification laws. That should do for now, Mr. Kegan."

"Hegan!"

"Not according to the Central Security report. How's the baking business in GA, anyway?"

"Just a damn minute! I came from CA, and I am a Corporation employee—I have been for eight years. I've done field work in every Regency west of TX, but I've never even been in GA. There's been some kind of mistake."

"Yep, and I think you made it. The Corporation's never heard of you. I talked to the Regent myself. He doesn't know of you, your assignment, or anyone in CA who does. Sorry."

"This is ridiculous. There must be records of me."

"There are—in GA."

"But that's not me!"

"How are you going to prove it?"

Hegan's answer was a weak and uncertain, "I don't know."

"Then tell it to the Adjustor, bud."

Hegan sat down abruptly, shaken. Who, after all, knew him well enough to identify him? His assignments were made by the marketing computer. He shopped, banked and worshipped by phone. He had no regular companions,

partly by choice and partly because of his profession—there were only the arranged dates. And if I'm shipped off to Rehab or worse, who will care besides me? I am who I say I am! Isn't that enough?

"Hi," said a friendly voice, intruding on his brood. "I'm Elgin Meyers, Central Records."

Hegan looked up, unhappy. "You've got to help me. Something's terribly wrong. No one believes I'm me."

"I believe you."

"You do? Then get me out! This stopped being funny a long time ago. Those fellows out there want to send me away."

"No, this is not a laughing matter," Meyers agreed. "But I'm not sure I can get you out."

"You said you believed me!" Hegan said pleadingly.

"And so I do. But my belief is not a legal proof." Meyers unbuttoned his suit-coat and sat down on the bench across the hall. "The apartment you said you recently lived in became available today. Your high school memory book has a picture of a young boy, bearing your claimed name, and there is a resemblance. But even pictures are not acceptable identification. Only a retinagraph, an alpha tracing or voiceprint will be accepted in court."

"According to the troopers, I'm a baker in GA!"

"Oh, that was only the computer doing its best to find you," Meyers said with a wave of his hand. "Those charges have all been erased, with the appropriate apologies."

"Then what's keeping me here?"

"The Alien Acts, now." Meyers leaned back and crossed his legs, relaxed. "It is important, you know, to keep tight controls on identification. As a citizen, you have a birthright — a share in our natural resources. But even though this country was generously supplied, there are limits. With careful controls, we stay within them. But if we were to freely give away shares in that birthright to all those outside who might want one —" Meyers shook his head. "It wouldn't take long."

"But what happened to my records? How did they disappear from everyone's data?"

"If you're like most people, you don't quite understand how our records system works. Although there are thousands of computers—banking, commerce, communications, transport, engineering—they're really nothing more than data processors. All record-keeping—the memory function—is done at Centrals, under your citizen number. The other computers can take data from the Centrals, but only to work with, not to retain. It's a great economy, and gives us great flexibility."

"So what went wrong?"

"Your transfer here brings you under the jurisdiction of a new Central, and of course, your records were transferred, from CA to NV, ID, MT, SD and finally, here. Or should have been. They left CA, but never got out of ID. We uncovered a fault in an active transponder that not only garbled and destroyed your records, but sent back a confirmation of arrival. CA then erased their records—memory space is in high demand. You are now a quite unique person—you are simply here. No birth, no parents, no education or degree, no work record, no accumulated benefits, no security clearance, no commuter's license, no citizenship or political party, no medical history, credit, money, or—officially—name. What you do have is a big problem."

Hegan was amazed. "Do you mean to tell me there are no duplicate records

kept anywhere?"

"Oh, come now, Carl, we are a little bit more sophisticated than that! It's not a matter of bad planning—no, indeed! It's a matter of bad timing. A week from now, there will be duplicate records. But not now. A new memory system is being installed in DC Central, where the dupes are ordinarily kept." Meyers smiled, pleased at his little joke. "You see, we hope to someday eliminate the various centrals in favor of a nationwide system. This is the first step towards it—the old system was not adaptable."

"Nothing on paper."

Meyers shuddered. "Please be realistic. A paper record for a man your age—all the repetition of effort—and getting it all in one place! Paper would be a nightmare. Why, the intra-computer transmission for you was probably eight or ten seconds."

"No hope of reconstructing it, then."

"Absolutely none, I'm afraid."

"Or taking my word for it?"

"The Alien Acts," Meyers reminded him gently.

"What does that leave us?"

"Very little, I'm afraid."

Hegan hesitated, then offered a suggestion. "You could free me outside the border. Let me take my chances among the aliens."

"How could I get a travel permit and energy allotment for a non-person? It will be difficult enough explaining the use of my stunner."

"That's your suggestion?"

"It's a solution elegant in its simplicity," Meyers said, resting his folded hands on his knee. "A hundred years ago they used to transfer documents by a process called mailing a letter. One piece of paper was wrapped inside another, and on the outside you wrote the name of the person you wanted it to go to. It was a horrible system. With most of the sorting and delivery by hand, there were many errors. Now and then an address was torn off, or obscured."

Hegan stared at Meyers, saying nothing.

"These letters were sent to what was called — pardon the expression — the dead-letter office, where postal workers opened them and tried to find out who they were sent to or by. You are our little lost letter, with your address torn off and nothing inside to help us out."

"I suppose I can guess what happened to the letters they couldn't deliver."

Meyers, the Adjutor, drew his stunner from an inside jacket pocket. "They destroyed them. Love letters to estranged mates, final billing notices, kids' notes to Santa and the Easter Bunny — I'm sorry, Mr. Hegan. You really are an intolerable problem."

Hegan caught himself on the verge of agreeing with the pleasant little man and rebelled. "No! You don't have the right," he said, moving towards the blue-lit border of the cell. "I'm not a letter. I'm a person, with a past. You can't dispose of me like some trivial piece of paper waste. Human beings have to count for more. It would be just as easy to turn off this cell and let me walk out as it would be to use that thing. And *I want to live!*"

"My, my," said Meyers, not the least taken aback. "If this had bars I imagine you'd be rattling them. Why do you want to be free? Free to what? To die on your own? Don't you know there are bounties on aliens? Or perhaps you imagine yourself living off the land in some wholesome, primitive way. Do you know a single edible plant by sight? Of course not. You'd be much wiser to have me kill you now."

"Then I prefer to be stupid, and alive, at least for a while. Don't you see what

you're about to do? You're taking the silence of a machine as more meaningful than the word of a man. Where do you get the right? What lets you think that way?"

Meyers shrugged. "I am an Adjustor. It's my job. And that gives me the right to kill you." He raised his weapon and pointed it at Hegan's face. "Or not to, as I see fit," he said, lowering it and switching off the cell.

Hegan took a tentative step forward.

"This is the easiest part," Meyers said. "I doubt you'll last a week. And even if you do, what's the point? You didn't just lose your past today. You lost your future as well."

"We'll see," Hegan said, picking up his jacket and stepping into the hallway. I lost a future. There are other possible ones."

"Now you even sound like an alien. Get going, Mr. Hegan."

Hegan took a deep breath, then headed down the passageway.

"Carl!" Meyers called suddenly.

Hegan looked back, half expecting to find Meyers pointing his weapon once more.

"You aren't going to thank me, are you?"

"For playing games with my life? Or for doing the only proper thing? No, I won't thank you. I'm glad you did it, but I owe you no thanks."

"You've got some spirit, do you know that?" Meyers said. "I work out of Chicago. I don't know where you're headed, but if you do survive and you're interested, contact me there. I could use someone like you — a little less self-righteous, perhaps."

"I'm not interested."

"It's probably not relevant, since you won't live long enough. But the offer still stands." He tossed something through the air, and Hegan caught it: a five-credit coin. "Consider it an investment."

Hegan bit back an angry reply, afraid of a man who could so casually threaten his life. He fled the station.

"The Kampfert building," Meyers called after him. "Twelfth floor."

Not likely, Hegan thought bitterly as he reached the street. Without a conscious decision he headed south on the sidewalk. He had not thought it out beyond this point; in fact, he had not thought it would come out this way at all.

As he walked, he began to realize just how little he had gained. No employer would hire him without an ID check, and he could not pass one. Even the attempt would put him back in a cell, this time not as a transport error, but as an alien.

More, without an ID, his credit was nonexistent, and his savings had disappeared. All his capital rested in his pocket: a single metal triangle.

His stomach took that moment to remind him that he hadn't eaten yet that day. The five credits could buy him more than an adequate dinner, but what then of tomorrow? And it would be dark in three or four hours — where would he sleep? Was there a place in the city he could sleep in safety?

Hegan realized, too, that the problems promised to continue — solved today to reoccur the next day. It slowly hardened in his mind that Meyers' offer was the only one he was likely to get, now or ever. And yet Chicago was inconceivably far away.

The TransPorts and sungliders were out of the question, on both ID and finance counts. A small car hummed by as Hegan turned down a side street, and set him to wondering. Did the roads between cities still exist in any usable form? It scarcely mattered — no car would hold a charge for that long a journey.

Could he walk nine hundred kilometers? The new wilderness, glimpsed now and then from a 'glider, was forbidding.

And yet, there was really no other way. The centralized cities were populated oases of energy; cut off from the sun-powered TransPorts and 'gliders, he could only pass between cities using his own energy.

The sight of a police vehicle moving by on a cross street ahead caused Hegan to stiffen involuntarily. He could not wander up and down the streets forever; even the aliens were smart enough not to do that.

Reaching the corner, Hegan stopped to reconnoiter. A small crowd was gathered on the lawn of an old home halfway down the side street, a lawn also populated by several rows of tables. One man, standing on a stool, was shouting unintelligibly. Hegan smiled. An auction would be a good place to lose himself for a while.

Hegan wandered along the aisles, one ear tuned to the auctioneer and the other to the conversations of the people he passed.

("That old?"

"She's 87, he's 88."

"Why bother to get divorced?"

"She said she couldn't stand him any more."

"I feel like a vulture."

"I know — they're even selling the food.")

It became quickly clear that there were too few buyers, and as a result, most items were going for surprisingly few credits.

At the end of one row of tables, Hegan stopped and stared. What wasn't chipped black paint was rust, but all the essential parts seemed in good shape: a motorized bike, waiting to be sold.

A bored-looking man sidled up to Hegan. "Won't sell," the man observed sagely.

"What?" Hegan was startled by being spoken to.

"They never do. They'll have to put something with it, hook some poor guy into carting it away."

"Why?"

"Why? Worthless, that's why. Used to see those old mopeds all the time, few years back. They weren't bad when there was still gas — I'll bet they were the last things rolling. But now that the mo don't have no go — they're too damn heavy to pedal. And the gear ratio's all wrong."

"Interesting," Hegan said, and moved away to a table laden with boxes. Hegan peeked inside one, and was surprised to see they were full of books. Pulling one thick volume out, he flipped through it idly. In the middle was a section of colored maps, and he turned to the map of MN and studied it a moment. The old interstates, abandoned in his grandfather's time — they had tied together the whole continent, a thousand threads of concrete and asphalt. There was even one thread that lead straight to Chicago —

Replacing the book, Hegan began to read the spines. Before long he came to one whose brown cover was so faded as to be unreadable, and he opened it. The book had been thoroughly soaked; the thick pages were curled and stained. But as he flipped through it, he grew excited; his eyes fell on the words "Nature", "camp", and "woodlore". Looking back towards the bike, he saw it was shielded by the circle of people. He rushed back to join them.

"Who'll start at three credits? Every family should have one?" The assistant, holding the bike, shook his head and chuckled at the auctioneer's last comment.

"Here," Hegan blurted. Why not, he asked himself.

"Havethreegimme four," the auctioneer began to chant. "Threegimme four, look at the fine condition. A real classic, a find —"

"Three and a quarter," called a voice behind Hegan. Hegan turned to find it was the man who'd said the bike was worthless.

"Three and a half," Hegan said quickly, staring at the man.

The bidder smiled. "And seventy-five?" asked the auctioneer, and the man nodded.

"Four," Hegan said, making his face as emotionless and his voice as determined as he could.

"And a quarter?" The bored expression returned to the man's face, and he waved off the auctioneer.

Hegan saw it and sighed. It was his first moment of true relaxation for the day.

THE DIN from the tall grass and weeds lining the road had reached unexpectedly terrifying proportions. Hegan stopped pedaling and let the bike coast a dozen meters to a stop. Straddling the machine, he glanced at the mileage marker ahead, then at the darkening sky. The marker said, "Keep going"; the sky, "time to stop," and it spoke more convincingly.

Kicking the balky stand into place, Hegan left the moped and sat crosslegged on the concrete. He reached inside his shirt and withdrew the tattered nature manual, looking at it appreciatively. He had been lucky to get it. When a woman had outbid him for the box of books, he had thought it was lost to him. But when he had followed her away from the auction and asked if he might buy it, she took one look at its faded cover and loose pages and sniffed, "Take it."

Tomorrow he would read the chapters on poisonous and edible plants; now he needed it for other reasons. From a shirt pocket he drew two pencils. No one had noticed when he had plucked them from a box of assorted junk at the auction; they were, to the bidders, of trivial value.

Peeling back the thin cone of wood around the point with his fingernail, Hegan sharpened the lead by rubbing it against a smooth patch of pavement. Turning to the inside front cover of the manual, he began to write:

Log/Day One

Bought old moped for four credits. Used last credit for dinner (stew). Rode 20 miles if I'm reading these pre-metric signs right. Will sleep in road. Legs not too tired. Great racket from woods along road, forgot they were alive.

Hegan wrote slowly and awkwardly; like most people, he had always used a keypad for writing. He knew the shape of every letter perfectly, but had never had to form them, and struggled with the mechanics of it. When he had finished with his log entry, he turned to the back cover and began a new paragraph:

Carl Hegan

Carl Hegan

Carl James Hegan

I will not lose what I am! I like chess, long-legged women and watching fiddler crabs. I was born in CA 95813 — Sacramento — my father James F (would never say what the F was for) and my mother Charlene Ann.

The dimming light brought his writing to a halt a paragraph later. The noises made him apprehensive about sleep, but tomorrow meant a long ride. There

was no telling how much food he would find or how soon — what energy he had must be conserved.

There had already been a drop in temperature; perhaps later he would need his jacket around him, but for now it made a passable pillow. Hegan stretched out on the pavement, arms crossed behind his head. With a will he closed his eyes, and bid sleep to come.

Log/Day Two

Read the section on edible plants. Books are so strange — keep expecting the words to move. Spent an hour looking for food, but only found 6 of what I think are “mayapples.” Not the best eating, but forced down 3. Covered 81 miles; had hoped for more after a good start, but cramped up around noon and had to walk it, then cramped again and stopped to rest. My legs are all knots and I am shaky. Bike is heavy. Water not a problem — many streams along/under road. Using useless chapters as waste paper; the ultimate bad review. Still saw no people, though passed number of buildings and one small town. All in cities — perhaps in medium-sized city to north — can see its lights. Many animals I do not recognize and give wide berth. Writing coming along. Mnpls. 50 miles ahead. If I remember map, will have to pass very close and am worried. I am also hungry.

Log — Day Three

End pages full — start on margins. Slept badly and am very sore. Legs ache constantly and all exposed skin burned. Had to force myself to get going. After food search (strawberries!) legs felt better, skin did not. Goodbye to “Breakfast in Camp” page. Half a mile and began to hurt again, like late yest. Seat is too low — can’t use right muscles or muscles right. No way to change, though. Made myself continue — knowing I was near Mnpls. helped. (Wished Meyers worked there — would be over). Freeway loop around Mnpls. still in use — almost on it before I realized. Had to back up, can’t afford to be seen — cell too clear in memory. Wasted some time on side roads.

69 miles?

Log — Day Four

A sixteen-page day — don’t know whether to eat rest of strawbs. Nearly turned back to Mnpls. and end it — feel so weak and sick. What stopped me? Meyers — hate to prove him right. Strange names for abandoned towns — Wastedo, Zumbrota, Oronoco. 82 miles and paying for every one.

Day Five

Today I met a farmer.

There was no question about it. Odd as it was, the fence remained a fence, stretched across the highway. Or rather, stretched across where the highway had once been. The asphalt simply ended, jagged-edged, at the strands of metal, and a great patch of brown earth began. Fifty meters farther on was another fence, and beyond it the road continued, a smooth ribbon curling out of sight beyond a woods.

The fences connected a large pasture on the right with the farmhouse sitting on the hill to the left. Going around the fence would mean a long tramp through the low brush surrounding the pasture or circling close by the house. Neither choice was attractive, so Hegan grasped the frame of the bike to lift it over the fence.

The bike was heavy and awkward, and as Hegan maneuvered with it, a barb on the top strand of rusted wire caught Hegan's shirt, then his skin underneath. With a little cry, he dropped the bike on the other side. It made little noise as it hit the ground, but Hegan glanced nervously up to the house, all the same.

Getting himself through the fence was easier, though he did leave a long shallow scratch down one forearm when he let a strand of wire move back into place too soon. But he was through, and in a minute would be on the road again. Straightening out the heap that was his bike, he glanced again at the house, then walked the bike quickly to the other fence.

As he took it in his hands to lift it again, he heard a throat being cleared behind him.

"Who might you be?" asked a man's voice clearly.

Hegan set the bike back down and turned, his mouth suddenly dry. The farmer, bearing an old but doubtless effective shotgun, was imposing enough; the three brawny young men — sons? — standing just behind him were overkill.

Hegan licked his lips before answering. "Carl. Carl Hegan. I wasn't —"

"You be police, Carl? Corporation enforcer? Food thief? Alien?"

"I was just trying to use the highway. You've got it pretty well blocked off here, you know." There was no point in being overly timid; he was in trouble already.

"Where you be going, Carl, on the highway? Not much used these days."

"To Chicago. I wasn't hurting anything. You'd never have even known I was here."

"But I do know. Why do you travel this way? People who go to Chi-town, don't they have other ways?"

"I have to use the road — I can't go the other ways. I'm not part of that world anymore. Don't have any ID, don't have any money — I'm an outsider."

Inexplicably, the farmer's expression softened. He stepped forward, clapping Hegan on both shoulders, and said, "You have not been eating well." It was a statement, not a question. "We'll see what's left from lunch. Sven, take his machine," the farmer directed. "See what might be done to make it ride better." He dispatched his other sons back to the fields beyond the pasture, and then with Hegan started up toward the house. "My name is Oleson. Ole Oleson. We are Outsiders, too."

"How long have you been out here?"

"My family has been here for more than one hundred years. My great-grandfather was first. When the other people left, we stayed. It is good land."

"When did you tear up the road?"

"I helped my father, thirty years ago," the sinewy Scandinavian said. "We took back what was taken from us. When the highway was built, it cut off the house from our best fields. We fixed it."

Oleson seated Hegan in the kitchen, while his wife, a tiny woman, scurried to fill a plate. Hegan thanked her, and began eating immediately. It was cold, but it was a gourmand's delight compared to the fare of the last few days.

"Have you been traveling far?"

"From Fergus. It's taken me five days — I can't ride very fast."

"Sven will take some of that useless weight from the machine. Why to Chicago, Carl? Most Outsiders stay away from the cities."

"There's a man I have to see. And I'm not really an Outsider — not in the way I think you mean it. I didn't give up my ID — I lost it, or it was lost for me." Hegan chuckled and concentrated on his plate. "I hope to get it back when I reach Chicago. I sure don't want to do this much longer." He looked up from his food

to find Oleson regarding him stonily; his wife, who had been standing in the doorway listening, had disappeared.

"Did I say something to offend you?" Hegan asked, aware of the tension. "Finish your food," Oleson said coldly.

Hegan complied, uncomfortable. When only a few bites remained, Sven came through the back door.

"It's done," he started to say, but his father held up a hand to silence him, never taking his eyes off Hegan. The last of the food finally gone, Hegan wiped his mouth and looked at Oleson questioningly.

"You've shared our table, so hospitality forbids me to kill you," the farmer said. "But, by God, you'd better be off my land before —" He stood up menacingly.

The Oleson's dog nipped at Hegan's heels all the way to the fence.

Day Six

The bike is better, but I am not. Never knew how fast a meal could wear off. Legs were not meant for this.

Crossed a large river just after eleven — Mississippi? The highway passed just north of a good-sized city, and someone took a shot at me from the buildings near road. No one following me, though. I pulled off the road and waited to be sure.

Don't know how many miles — forgot to check marker this morning.

Day Seven

Sixty-three miles. Won't write in bio tonight — too tired. Too tired to write, too tired to think. Maybe still going because too tired to die.

Eight

Eighty two miles. Not a man, just a pedaling machine. Chi tomorrow. No more to write tonight — if I reach Meyers tomorrow, I'll have time. If not,

THERE WERE no guards at the roadblock, and many riders on the highway. The highway passed between huge, dark buildings, some obviously abandoned. Its surface was cracked and rough, each bump sending a refresher course in pain through Hegan's lower body. The blisters where his seat met the bike's seat had formed, broken, reformed, and broken again. His legs had set new standards for reluctant obedience.

As he rode, Hegan began to draw attention. His odd vehicle; his week-old beard and matted, dirty hair; his torn and soiled clothes; any one of those would have been enough to make people notice him. With all three, it was inevitable. Hegan did not care. A woman riding just behind him stopped and pointed him out to a passing police patrol; Hegan did not notice.

"The Kampfert Building," Hegan called, pulling alongside an older man. "Where is it?"

The man swung his bike away as if repulsed. "Downtown. Keep going. Erie — Grand. One of those ramps."

Hegan grimly pedaled on, increasing his speed. Weaving in and out among the commuters, he cursed the seemingly endless sprawl of Chicago. Ramps swept in and out from the highway, soaring overhead and dipping below. The road became a concrete trench through the heart of the city. Hegan pressed on, his legs beyond feeling. His eyes searched the signs; it was the only part of his body still alert.

At last, the great buildings towering just blocks to the east, Hegan decided to

abandon the highway. His bike slowed abruptly as he started up the ramp; it was too steep. He half-climbed, half-fell off his machine and walked on unsteady legs. The nature manual fell out of his shirt, through a gap marking missing buttons, and slid a few feet down the slope. When Hegan hesitated and looked back, he saw that he was being followed. Two bike police were at the foot of the ramp, quickly dismounting.

Leaving the book where it had fallen, Hegan began to run up the slope. The only pain that penetrated his awareness was the gouge of the metal pedal into the back of his ankle when the bike swerved too close. At the top of the ramp, he grabbed the arm of a woman who had stopped to rest.

"Kampfert Building," he demanded. "Where?"

She pointed, startled. "About three blocks. On the lakefront. Do you know you need a shower?"

He released her and clambered aboard his bike. But when he tried to launch himself forward with a thrust of the right pedal, it resisted momentarily, then spun forward, accompanied by a snapping sound and the rattle of metal against metal. His foot slipped off the pedal, which whirled in a circle to strike the back of his calf. As it did, the broken drive chain slid to the pavement.

Abandoning the bike, Hegan joined the people on foot on the sidewalk. Looking back, he saw the officers, stopped at his bike. One held his book, cradled in his arm. Hegan broke into an unsteady run.

Tears of pain blurring his vision, Hegan nearly passed the Kampfert Building. When he noted the inscription above the doors of the building across the street, he ducked out into the bike traffic. He left in his wake two collisions involving five bikes and six riders, and stumbled up the steps and into the lobby.

The building security guards were lounging by the coffee shop, but they noticed Hegan immediately and broke into pursuit. They were a full second too slow, though, as the doors of the lift slid closed just after Hegan slipped between them.

The other passengers stood away from Hegan, wearing frowns or expressions of disgust. Leaning on the handrail and panting, Hegan was too exhausted to notice or care. When the lift stopped on the second level, they all hastened out, leaving Hegan alone. He moved to the controls and pressed the button to twelve.

When the doors opened again, Hegan staggered out and stood for a moment at the directory. He found the room number he wanted just as someone cried out behind him, "You there, hold it where you are." The guards were in good shape; they had come up the stairs.

Hegan glanced at the nearby door numbers and took off down the corridor. Halfway to the end, he grabbed a doorknob and disappeared inside a suite. Ignoring the protests of the secretary, he half-ran, half-fell into Meyers' office. He collapsed on the couch, doubled up with pain, as Meyers looked up from his desk, unsurprised.

A moment later the muscular bulk of the two guards filled the doorway.

"Get up, fella," one said.

"Sorry about this, Mr. Meyers," the other said at the same moment. "We'll take care of him."

Meyers waved them away. "It's all right. He's one of mine," he said, and turned back to his work.

The cramps easing, Hegan opened his eyes. "Well?" he said.

"Well, what?" Meyers said without looking at him.

"I'm here — I made it. Don't you have something to say?"

Meyers glanced up from his work momentarily. "You're two days late.

You've already missed one assignment."

Hegan found the strength to slowly sit up. "You're moving a little too fast. I can't work for you until you've answered a question," he said, still breathing heavily. "Would you have really killed me?"

"What do you think?" Meyers asked, swiveling his chair so he could study Hegan.

"Yes. I think you would have. And I don't know if I can —"

"My drama coach will be pleased to hear that," Meyers said. "No, I would not have killed you. But you must admit it added something to the quality of your feelings. None of this has happened by accident, Carl. I selected you."

"Selected me? The transmitter glitch?"

"Of course. And we have kept tabs on you ever since."

"So I was never really in danger — your people were there to help if —"

"Not true. Everyone you dealt with knew you only for what you appeared to be. We would not have interfered. If the police had caught you —." He left the thought unfinished. "I need people who can take care of themselves. I knew I wanted you to work for me. What I needed to find out was if you wanted to work for me."

Hegan inexplicably began to laugh, fitfully at first, then great convulsing waves of mirth.

"An employment interview?" he managed to croak. "Just a damned employment interview." He fell back, stretching lengthwise on the couch, and let the laughter come. For the moment, there was nothing else worth doing.

Michael P. Kube-McDowell

"Science-fiction's attraction is, for me, more emotional than intellectual; it is my way of cheating Time. I'm convinced that the human race has a long and interesting future ahead of it; I'm equally convinced that there's no possible way I will see it all, which is a source of great frustration. By reading and writing SF, I can live in futures I otherwise would not be able to share.

When I'm in the present, I teach middle-school science, write science and history pieces for area newspapers, and serve as a writing consultant for a major pharmaceutical corporation. I have been rightly accused of being a libertarian (except in dark moods) and a rationalist.

I am seeking a publisher for one novel, *The Open Face of Heaven*, and am deep into another, *The Second Coming*."

A PRINCESS

A nine foot insect

of royal lineage

bearing the crown of its race.

Can a princess be a creature

draped in robes of terror

or

draped in robes of glamour

Only the right eye of the engineer

and the left eye of the poet

can unite to see the glamour of

the princess,

ignore the monstrousness of

the insect.

MARVIN KAYE

grumblefritz

AN OPEN LETTER TO READERS LIVING IN MANHATTAN

Dear Fellow Gothamites,

Forgive me for interrupting your leisurely perusal of improbable literature. I do not do so lightly, but the situation is desperate. We New Yorkers are in danger of losing one of our most precious natural resources.

I refer to the sea serpent who lives next to the Statue of Liberty. His name is Grumblefritz. He's my friend.

YOU WILL appreciate, I hope, that I approach this topic with diffidence. On several occasions, I have exchanged heated words with family members on the subject of my acquaintanceship with Grumblefritz. So you may readily imagine how much more difficult it is for me to broach the subject to total strangers. But in the face of imminent crisis, I am forced to set aside my customary reticence.

I first met Grumblefritz one night while I was flying over Manhattan. (I was not in an airplane. I was just flying.)

There was a bright, clear moon in the sky. It shone through the shades of my bedroom on the twelfth floor of my apartment building, not far from the Hudson River. It was shortly past midnight, but I wasn't tired, so I rose gracefully to the ceiling, floated to the southwest window (it's much easier to flow through than the one facing due south), and glided gently forth above 85th Street.

There was a light mist in the air that felt refreshingly cool upon my astral cheeks.

For a while, I lolled lazily over the West Side, then, wishing a bit of exercise, I shot due west, veered south and followed the silver line of the river as it flowed down toward The Battery. I showed off a little, I confess, looping-the-loop over and around the World Trade Center. At length, I swooped out past the Hudson basin and into Upper Bay where the Statue of Liberty glowed like some great green troll haunting the depths.

My energy began to flag. Thinking of the invitation carved upon Dame Liberty, I determined to employ her as a resting-place. So I wafted down and lit on her torch (No pun intended).

The evening dew, combined with the water-mist, dampened my hair and skin, but not my spirits. I delighted in the orange glow illuminating the sky above my island home: a magic nimbus that vaguely recalled earlier times when my ambitions were not blunted by the dull tread of the years.

It must have been that ghost-scent of muted goals that tickled my friend's palate, for that is when the back of my neck bristled. My scalp started tingling. A riot of goose-pimples prickled the skin of my legs and arms.

Something was watching me, I was sure of it. Yet I couldn't imagine what. I

am practically invisible when I indulge in nocturnal aviation.

I glanced about but saw nothing. I squinted my eyes half-shut, thinking perhaps some fellow traveler, hopefully a feminine itinerant, hovered nearby . . .

And then a gentle breeze that smelled like a mixture of cotton candy and cinnamon teardrops tousled my hair. I craned my head up and got my first glimpse of Grumblefritz. Or, to be precise (for it is only by attention to minutiae that I may hope to gain credence), I spied a single portion of Grumblefritz.

One yellow eye.

I gawked. The mammoth orb blinked once, then crinkled down at me with an air of weary benevolence.

"Welcome, wee morsel," said a deep, mellow voice. "What brings you here, to the Isle of Grumblefritz?" The musical tone was reminiscent of the clear lilt of English spoken in Dublin.

However, I was not reassured by "morsel," so I floated some distance away before replying.

As I tread air, I studied the newcomer. Though he was tall and suggested great hidden bulk, his skin wrinkled sadly, as from undernourishment. Half his reptilian body remained concealed beneath the waves of the bay, but his crimson-crested head blinked benignly down from a height some twenty stories above the topmost flametip of the Statue of Liberty.

"Greetings, O Surprising Entity," said he. "I am Grumblefritz, and this is my domain. You are the only dream I've seen these many months, and you seem a mite insubstantial. How did you come here? Did a wayward spell waft you to Grumblefritz?"

"Your Mighty Serpentship," quoth I, "permit me to correct you. I am no wispy dream, merely a disembodied dreamer."

He sighed so deeply that his emerald scales rattled and clanked against one another. "Ah, I should have guessed as much. Few dreams remain, and those there are must be coaxed forth."

Although the serpent's body, were it fully revealed, must be huger than a megalosaurian, he seemed the mildest of creatures. I found the half-twist that is his rueful smile oddly appealing. Therefore, I drew nearer.

"O puissant water-sprite," saith I, "what use make you of dreams?"

"Sweet stripling," he smiled bleakly, "I do not deign to dine on people, fish or fowl. Grumblefritz eateth nothing coarser than granulated dreams."

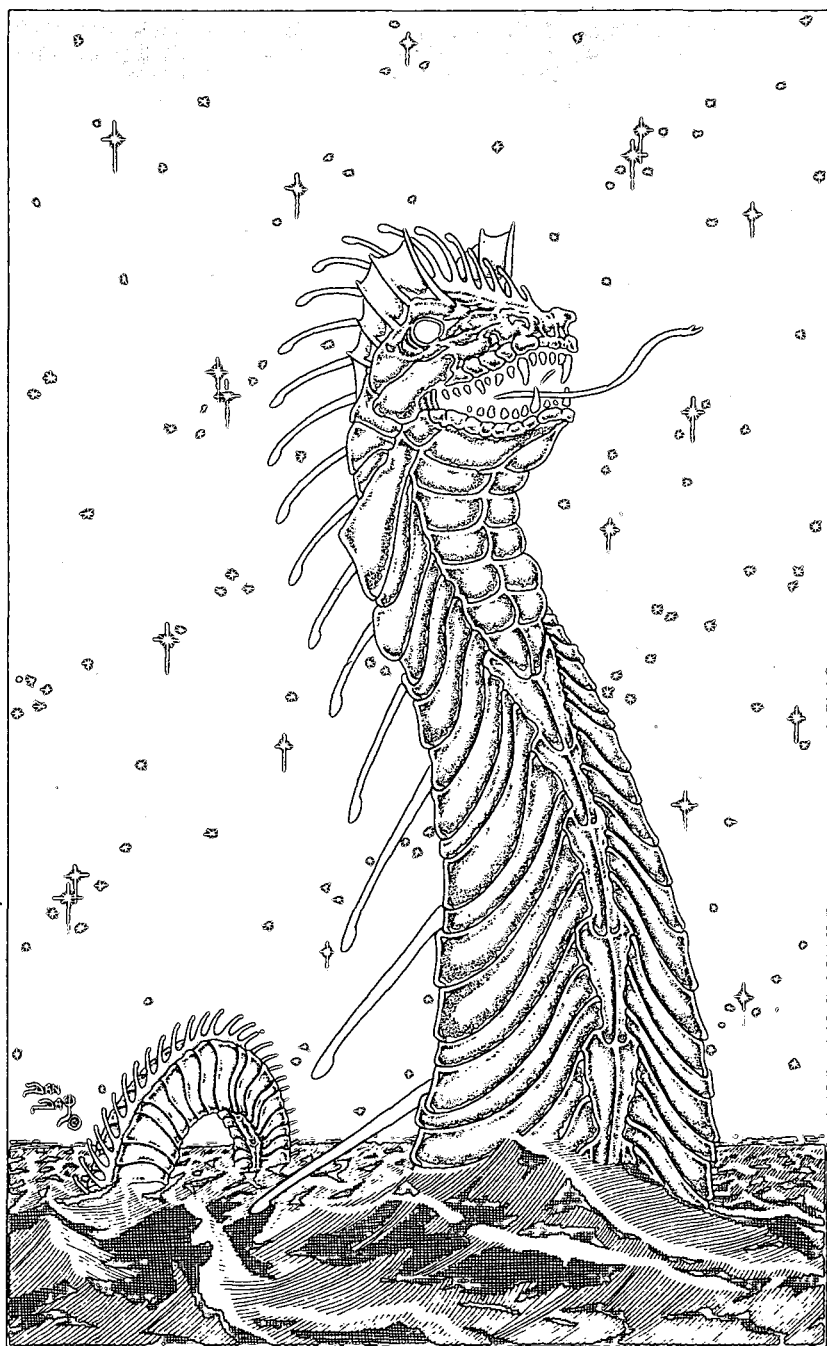
"But in that case, and considering where we are, don't you get awfully hungry?"

"You better believe it!" Grumblefritz snorted.

He and I soon became fast friends. We spent the better part of that night sharing our loneliness and commiserating on the way the world ignores its artists and sea serpents. Before I flew home, I vowed to search out some goodies for him to eat.

But I did not reckon on the difficulty of the assignment. In the past few weeks, I have expended colossal stores of energy trying to fish up palatable dreams for Grumblefritz to grow fat on. But he is the fussiest of connoisseurs.

For instance, I brought him a few hopes skimmed off the surface of the Hudson in my neighborhood, but he complained they were too green. So I waited down by the base of Battery Park, thinking to garner the riper wishes as they flowed into the bay. Yet when I brought some to Grumblefritz, he haughtily turned up his nose. "You picked those where the waters of the Hudson merge with the East River. Pfui! They are tainted with those slivery *cauchemars* that



Illustrated by Dan Day

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wriggle their way down from Yorkville!"

I've plucked daydreams from Wall Street, but Grumblefritz says they are too stale. I flew north to the Harlem River, but he worries the spicing might inflame his gall bladder. Once I even zoomed all the way out to Far Rockaway because Grumblefritz sensed there was a teenager there with a Cinderella wish.

He was right. A fifteen-year-old with acne stared at her mirror and squinted away the wens. I sneaked up behind her and tried to steal her dream, but she fought desperately to keep it. So I relinquished my hold and waited till she was asleep. Only by then, her dream had changed into something a bit slimy, like those crawly fantasies on Eighth Avenue that Grumblefritz says he'll die before eating.

"Look," I protested one night. "I can't bear to see you waste away like this! It's not much, but I am going to make a sacrifice to you of my one remaining dream!"

He wrinkled his upper lips suspiciously. "Wee one," the sea serpent addressed me, "I hope you are not referring to that tawdry hope of yours that someday you will shout SHAZAM! and immediately be lightning-blasted into becoming Captain Marvel?"

Hanging my head, I admitted it was so.

"I appreciate the gesture," Grumblefritz said, "but you can keep that dream. I can't swallow anything but Prime, and that isn't even Grade A."

I'm really worried about my friend. It's almost impossible to find anything he'll condescend to eat, and meanwhile, he grows thinner and thinner. Last night, in desperation he muttered something about moving to Philadelphia or perhaps Washington, but we both know that Delaware River water will rot his scales (he's half-dragon on his mother's side), while anything he finds in the Potomac will just be empty calories.

"The real trouble," he moaned weakly, "is that I am used to dining on Big Dreams, my tiny traveler! Collective Dreams! Not these safe and selfish little reveries that no one — not even the dreamers themselves — truly prize."

I patted Grumblefritz, trying to comfort him, but at last, his protracted fast turned him delirious. "I remember!" saith he, rolling his great head from side to side on the stones of Liberty Island, "how well I remember when Broadway attracted the brightest of dreams! In those days, ah, what feasts! Such delicacies! Ambrosial!"

And he fainted from hunger.

O my friends and fellow New Yorkers! Think about it! Do you recall the Great Dreams of our youth? Well, if it hadn't been for Grumblefritz' appetite, we would all still be slogging through tons of discarded ambitions and tarnished talents and tired-out potentials.

Now that dreams are scarce, we *must* do something! Out of sheer nostalgia, or gratitude, if you will, can't we New Yorkers make a single concerted effort and strive to produce *one last Great Dream* so Grumblefritz will not starve?

S.O.S., my friends! S.O.S.!

Save Our Sea-serpent! ●

HOPEFULLY,

M. N. Kaye

Marvin Kaye

The Real McKaye

I co-founded and direct a readers theatre ensemble in New York called "The Open Book." A few years ago, we produced a show called "The Lighter Side of Darkness," which focused on some of the more amusing aspects of fantasy. Since the show included an ensemble section in which six readers did a variety of fantasy tales and songs, sometimes solo, sometimes as a group, I tried to write that part of the script so that everyone got an opportunity to have a solo or duo feature. Two of the performers got to play "Ms. Lipshutz and the Goblin," which was written specially for their talents and only later turned into a short story (which ran in FANTAS-

TIC). Another piece which I wrote for that occasion was "Grumblefritz," a monologue for Toby Sanders, a Stan Laurel-ish professional clown who belongs to our troupe and has the wonderfully tentative quality which the unnamed narrator of "Grumblefritz" requires. Later, I expanded that piece into a story, too, hoping that its message would be seen as a national commentary and not just one relating to New Yorkers: too much dreaming is unhealthy, but the kind of Saran-wrap reveries we've been fed by the media for decades is even worse: they are, as Grumblefritz might put it, "empty calories."

THE CELERY STALK IN THE CELLAR

The celery stalk in the cellar
Gets bigger and bigger each day.
'Twas grown by an aged bank-teller,
And it feeds on tobacco and hay.

It grows and it grows in the night-time;
Its flowers are pieces of chalk;
Its fruit-yield is three quarts of quicklime —
Good God! It's beginning to walk!

O Help! It's devoured the plumber!
(The garbageman ran up a tree).
It's gotten the landlady's number,
And now it's advancing on me!

Oh, goody, 'twas only a nightmare!
(I wake up and heave a big sigh).
Ere bedtime I solemnly now swear
No more to eat celery pie!

But, hark ... I hear noise on the stairways ...
(My heart is beginning to balk).
AARGH! AT THE DOOR! (Feel my hair raise).
It's a ten-foot-high celery stalk!

—A "Napkin Poem" by Marvin Kaye

THE CONTAINMENT of CALPEL V

THE CAPTAIN was three feet tall, flushed a deep green and belligerent. "You have no right," he said to me, "to retain myself and my crew in this facility. We are assigned to a legitimate exploratory mission; you have gone far beyond the codes in saying that we are not permitted to leave and I will make a complaint to your superiors —"

I shrugged, looked down at my desk, tried to avoid the stare of the little Calpellian. The guide books say that they are a gentle and accommodating race, but this is public relations: Calpellian accommodation comes from the fact that they live in an occupied zone and like all objects of occupation must try to make the best of it. "That is your right," I said, "but transmission channels are all in use at the present time; I doubt if you will be able to get the complaint through before your scheduled departure. You would do well to simply go back and advise your crew that the mission will have to be rescheduled."

The captain's green scales edged greener yet and he hopped up and down, a disconcerting action for a spheroid creature of his dimension and one which in other circumstances might have been considered amusing; I did not find it amusing at all. "I won't tolerate this," the captain said, "you'll pay for this through channels." In Calpellian rolling gait he moved toward the door of my office. "I will not leave the matter at this," he said and went through the door.

Well, at least he had gone through the door. Calpellians can be stubborn and abusive; there had been uglier scenes of confrontation during the length of my assignment. But it meant that if nothing else the conflict would be postponed; I would have to deal with the captain in time when he found that his complaint through channels would be sent right back to the acting administrator who was me, but that was several cycles ahead and in the meantime I had taken off at least some of the pressure. The unfortunate thing was that the captain was precisely right; he *had* been detailed for a legitimate exploratory mission. He and his crew of five had been cleared through all channels to take their small craft up to the limits of gravitational effect to run tests on the atmosphere and the degree to which our occupying colony had altered it, but what the captain did not know was that all Calpellian flights had been indefinitely banned due to the awkward circumstances in the occupying colony.

The awkward circumstances had to do with the fact that several engineers in the third sector had finally buckled under stress conditions, the alien environment, the nature of the assignment and were now holding several hundred of their colleagues hostage, threatening to open the vents and flood their sector

Barry N. Malzberg

with dangerous Calpellian atmosphere unless they were granted amnesty and immediate passage home. The first word of the seizure had reached me twelve hours before and militia had been detailed; what had occurred now was a grim *cul de sac* in which negotiations had broken down and the outcome of the siege was highly uncertain. It was a military matter, out of my hands completely and I was grateful for that. However, the ultimate responsibility for the fiasco would eventually rest upon me and in the meantime it was of the utmost importance, obviously, that the circumstances be walled off in one sector and that none of the other sectors be involved, much less the Calpellians. Word of dissension among the occupying forces would have been highly demoralizing to the Calpellians and perhaps dangerous too; they might have mistaken the circumstance as making rebellion favorable and although overall security remained untouched, I did not want another massacre if I could help it. In my previous assignment it had been necessary to quell a revolution in the Sirian belt by killing several natives and although I had had every justification I did not want to acquire that kind of reputation. I would be backed up on Ganymede and bypassed forever if there were another such incident.

So I sat in my office with trepidation, but at least spared Capellian complaint, and continued to monitor the situation. There was nothing else I could do. The orders were clear under the policies and procedures: concede nothing, allow the siege to continue. Meanwhile additional craft in the area had been alerted and would be coming in within a day. If it were necessary to kill the engineers to free the hostages, we had the technological means to do it but that decision would not rest upon me. It would belong to the sector chief who would be coming in the first relief unit. All I had to do — as essentially had been my detail from the first — was to hold the situation.

Sitting in my office alone, in the solitude that the administrator of these occupations always must find as his center, I felt the self-pity welling up in me again; it really was not fair that the pressures of this circumstance devolved upon one man and of course I was everyone's enemy: the Calpellians could only see me as the symbol of their oppression, the engineers only as the martinet who imposed disciplines upon an already rigorous and alien environment. None of that was really true; I was merely enacting a rulebook and furthermore the occupation of Calpel V was absolutely crucial to our plans for the entire cluster over the next century. The planet was prime signal receptive terrain; we needed it in order to extend our defensive perimeters and without discipline the colony of occupation would — this had been proven — collapse within a matter of months from generalized boredom and the guilt-provoking cries of intelligent three-foot green creatures who rightly resented the restriction and reordering of their lives. But what else could be done? The stakes were enormous as they have been for the last decade. The war is moving into its critical phases, the next half a decade will probably tell the story and Calpel V is the flashpoint.

The captain came back into the room. Behind me was Dobbs, my secretary, wearing a shaken expression. "I don't know how he found out," he said, "I had nothing to do with it. I didn't want to let him in but he insisted." His palms were spread in a gesture of futility. I felt a vault of disgust for Dobbs at that moment which was so pure as to be almost exhilarating; looking at him I could understand why the Calpellians hated us. "He rolled by me," Dobbs said.

"I am afraid the situation cannot be so contained," the captain said to me. "It is not only your personnel but several hundred of us as well, servitors and translators and support system who are trapped down there. We are fully implicated in your massacre."

Dobb's eyes bulged. "I didn't tell him *anything* —"

"Get out," I said. "Get out immediately."

"Yes sir," Dobbs said. He went. The captain and I stared at each other.

"You are a reasonably sensitive man," the captain said, "for one of your race, that is. You know our language, you have at least attempted to understand our folkways, the brutal impact you have had on our life. You cannot implicate us in your own situation."

"I have no choice," I said, "the situation is already ongoing. All that we can do is to wait it out. Reinforcement crews are on the way."

"Our people cannot take these conditions. They will panic and die."

"My people are there too."

"Your people are in there voluntarily; they assumed risk. My people are victims."

I stared at the captain. He was no longer angry; his tint was a pale greenish blue and anthropomorphism or otherwise I seemed to see compassion in the arrangement of the four upper orifices which were his features. "What would you have me do?" I said. "There is nothing I can do; I am as helpless as you now."

"Allow my crew and I to go in there."

"That is ridiculous," I said, "you are an exploratory unit, a ship's crew, not a negotiating team."

"We were prepared for one kind of mission; this is another. It is the same thing: we are explorers, evaluators. We are equipped to deal with the dangerous and hostile."

"You mean you can bring them out, peaceably? Is that what you're saying? I don't think any of those three even speak your language."

"No one speaks our language, it seems, except you," the captain said.

"Nonetheless, that is not the issue. Let me take my crew in. Let me try."

"We have the sector under security —"

"You can bring us through the security. You can do that and you know you can. It is our people who are in there too. We are entitled to go in there on behalf of them."

I thought about it. It was not really a debate. The captain was right and allowing him and his crew to go in there was no risk at all to me. If they died, they would just be four more Calpellians caught in a massacre; if they were, unreasonably, able to talk sense to the engineers, great credit would come to me for having the ingenuity to find this solution. "I'm going to let you do it," I said. "But you must take the responsibility for what happens then."

"We have no choice but to take the responsibility if we go in there."

"All right," I said, "do you want to go in now?"

"As soon as possible."

"Then go on," I said.

The captain rolled through the door. A moment later Dobbs came in, his palms still extended. "No information on that came from here," he said, "you have to believe me —"

"Oh, shut up," I said. "The captain and his crew are going to go down there; we're going to take a long chance that he might be able somehow to distract the engineers or at least divert them so that a few people can escape. He agreed to do it."

"Why?"

"Because I asked him," I said, "and the Calpellians really don't have much of a choice, do they?"

"I understand," Dobbs said. He nodded to show his alertness. "So maybe it's a good thing that they did find out somehow."

"Maybe," I said. "I want you to clear them through. You know who to call, how to get them in. Tell them four Calpellians are going to go into the sector."

"What if the engineers won't let them in?"

"Have the negotiators put it to them. Let it be their decision. Let's not make it for them. I think they *will* take them in; increase the number of hostages."

"All right," Dobbs said. He went out of my office. I sat there alone again for a while and thought the situation through.

It seemed to me that I could not lose. Now and then in an administrator's career he stumbles through luck into such a circumstance; it can be his making. If the Calpellians did nothing to change the situation or were killed it was entirely their responsibility; it had been the captain's idea. I had merely acceded. On the other hand, if somehow they were able to change the balance of power, infiltrate the defenses, disarm the engineers or persuade them to come out, then a terribly dangerous situation had been solved because of my ingenuity in sending them in there. There was of course the fact that I had told Dobbs that it was my idea, not the captain's and if the captain and his crew were killed Dobbs might talk and some blame would come on me . . . but I would worry about Dobbs later. A secretary can be effectively controlled by an administrator; if he is not he is not a secretary very long. He is *nothing* very long. Dobbs could be handled and otherwise the situation, as best as it could be, was completely under control. I sat and under the difficult circumstances managed to feel a little satisfaction.

After a while Dobbs came in to tell me that everything had been set up and that the Calpellians were on their way. A little while after that — I prefer to filter all reports through an assistant — he reported that the Calpellians had been admitted to the sector and had gotten into the control room, with their weapons. Whether the engineers were aware of this possession I did not know. I put my feet up on the desk and reached into the drawer under them for a bottle; allowed myself the first cautious drink of the day.

A little while after that Dobbs ran in hysterically to tell me that garbled reports indicated that: the captain and his crew had killed the engineers and had slaughtered several of the hostages and that the Calpellian hostages had then joined in the slaughter; there had been feeble attempts at retaliation by confused and weakened colonists but apparently all of them had died. The Calpellians were now in control of the sector and had announced that they were turning on the poisonous atmospherics which would asphyxiate the colony.

"What the hell are we going to do?" Dobbs screamed.

"I'm not so worried about that," I said, upending the bottle, "as what the hell we're going to tell the fleet when they come in."

"We won't even be *alive* then!" Dobbs shouted.

"True," I said and, bemused, took out my weapon and shot him to death. There being no penalty.

I guess I'll never understand alien psychology.

I won't even have to try. ●

Barry N. Malzberg is the author of twenty-six science fiction novels, eight collections, eight (co-edited) anthologies, *BEYOND APOLLO* (Random House, 1972) and first winner of the John W. Campbell Memorial Award for best sf novel of the year

He has had over 200 science fiction stories in all of the magazines and original anthologies since 1967; also many stories in mystery and men's magazine markets. Former editor (4/68 - 10/68) *AMAZING* and *FANTASTIC*.

RASHIM 36M31 AND Alicia 24F79 were lovers. They met during fourth phase training maneuvers. After graduation, they managed to keep their affection hidden long enough to wrangle positions on the same star-bound freighter. Once the ship, the *Martian Victory*, was well out of Terran orbit, they were free to bill and coo as much as they liked. Too much time and money would be lost by sending one of them back to base.

If they hadn't been such a striking couple visually, their relationship would probably have been discreetly overlooked. Crew members frequently paired off during long voyages (and even short ones), but Rashim and Alicia were not ordinary crew members. They came from separate but similar reactionary colonies, the kind which had formed in remote regions two hundred years ago immediately after the Terran Unification. Although illegal, several generations had passed, and the Terran Council was still unable to eradicate them.

Rashim's family had belonged to a colony of desert dwellers that fled from all parts of the African continent into the northern desert rather than join in the global unification effort. Rashim had been captured twenty years earlier by a Civil Army patrol. The patrol wasn't big enough to capture the entire colony, but about a third of its members were taken from the desert and given re-orientation training near the Terran capitol. Since he was an infant, Rashim adapted easily to the ways of his captors and only occasionally wondered about his lost desert home. He differed from his homogenous peers mainly in the purple-blackness of his skin, the texture of his hair, and the fact that he stood six inches above the tallest Terran he had ever known.

Cynthia the Wagner-Emmons BARRIER

Alicia was an albino mutant. She was tall and lean with long silky colorless hair and red-violet eyes. Her pale skin covered large bones and strong muscles, but the alabaster of her face flushed girlishly pink when she was excited or embarrassed. She came from a colony which had been assembled for work at a power station near Antarctica. It was discovered that albino workers could withstand the emanations from the power source better than their pigmented brethren. The mutants had populated the area and continued to live as a colony even after the power system became obsolete and after the order to disband had been issued.

The Civil Army did not raid the polar regions as regularly as it did the desert. When Alicia was a child, her family left the colony of their own will to seek a life within the conventional Terran system. Like Rashim's, Alicia's differences were mostly skin deep, and she was a loyal Terran spacer.

Rashim and Alicia walked through the seamless metal passage of the freighter hand in hand, like the Black Knight and the White Queen from an ancient chess set. They often gazed at each other without speaking, exchanging only telepathic words. Although the brown haired, brown skinned members of the crew felt no prejudice toward them, visitors frequently did not

realize they were Terran.

Rashim was a trained fighter pilot. His job aboard the *Martian Victory* was to take the scouting craft, *Hornet*, out every four hours to check the upcoming corridor, or flight path, for other vessels and uncharted natural bodies. Usually this was a routine and uneventful assignment. Most of the ships he encountered accepted the universal friendship code and readily arranged a right of way for the huge Terran freighter.

The *Hornet* had once become entangled in the sticky tentacles of a Mercurian weather station. Its communicator was jammed and its ventilation system was plugged by the gelatinous goo with which the Mercurians cover almost all their long term, unmanned stations.

When Rashim failed to return, another craft was sent out to find him. He was towed back alive but unconscious, the outside of the *Hornet* scorched from the beams which burned off the tentacles. Coincidentally, during this crisis, Alicia had to be treated at the infirmary for dizziness, fainting, and unexplained blisters. The doctor diagnosed it as a psychosomatic anxiety reaction, but he was still puzzled by the blistering.

Alicia worked as an inter-galactic botanist. Most of the food for the crew of the *Martian Victory* was raised on board and harvested daily. Although some items were brought from Terran in storage, growing the food as it was needed left more space aboard for freight.

Since Rashim was only on duty one hour out of four, he spent a lot of time in the "hot house" with Alicia. The captain made a few token gestures to discourage this fraternization, but as long as his meals were tasty and served on time, he did not enforce his objections. The kitchen crew came to harvest the day's food supply every morning, but otherwise Rashim and Alicia were left alone.

About two months after the start of the voyage, Rashim lowered his long ebony body into the *Hornet* and took off for a routine scouting sweep. Four hours earlier, the corridor before the freighter had been completely clear of even small space junk. He started the mission half-distractedly, flipping the control switches without conscious thought. His mind was filled with Alicia's white form moving among the green vegetation.

Suddenly the *Hornet* lurched violently, tearing the controls from Rashim's loose grasp. He responded immediately and regained control of the vessel a short distance away from the tacking pattern. "What was that?" he thought, as he adjusted his instruments to sweep a pattern in line with his new position. A moment later all was quiet and normal, with only the dark expanse of eternity before him. Suddenly he was jolted again. This time it was less violent, and he did not lose control.

Rashim transmitted what had happened to the freighter. The *Martian Victory's* computer system went to work gobbling up information from the *Hornet's* instruments, digesting it, and hopefully spewing out an explanation. Meanwhile, two shuttles were sent out to join the *Hornet* just in case there was more trouble than Rashim could handle.

As he was waiting for the computer's response, Rashim became aware that the *Hornet* was trembling. It started so gently that he barely noticed, but the vibrations increased rapidly, and soon the interior of the vessel was nothing but a blur of light and shadow. Then with a great wrenching sound, the *Hornet* was torn from its flight pattern and hurled tumbling through the great void of space.

Rashim never heard the *Martian Victory's* reply to his message. The computer had been unable to assimilate the data fed into it from the

instruments and had rather testily suggested that such irrational gibberish should be referred to poets and theologians.

The two shuttles found no trace of Rashim nor his *Hornet* anywhere along the corridor. Their communicators briefly picked up a faint sound which could have been a human cry, but after that all was silence.

The captain walked slowly to the botanical quarters to tell Alicia personally about Rashim's disappearance. He had never felt really comfortable around the jet-black man and the ivory woman, but he understood what had existed between them, and he didn't want her to hear the news through wardroom gossip.

As he entered the room, he was almost overcome by the oppressive heat and humidity of the jungle-like atmosphere. He saw Alicia sitting on a stool between two sections of writhing, growing vines. The harvesters had finished their work, but Alicia had neglected to follow up with treatment to subdue the vegetation's activity.

Alicia knew that Rashim was lost. She sat stiffly with tears flowing from her red-violet eyes, over the pale lashes, and down her marble cheeks. The captain put his arm around her shoulder and led her gently from the room. Then he ordered the zoologist to hop over to the botanical section and slow down those vines before they took over the entire ship.

For weeks, Alicia sat in a trance, refusing to talk to anyone. Whenever she dropped off to sleep, she would awaken suddenly sobbing convulsively and moaning. She would take a swallow of water if it were held between her lips, but she refused all solid food. Finally, the medical officer started injecting her with nourishment, and she did not protest.

For a while, the members of the crew took turns visiting Alicia in the infirmary. They took her walking through the passage tubes and hoped the sight of familiar things would bring her back to her former self. The overworked zoologist led her through her old botanical quarters and joked about vegetables tasting like meat-burgers under his care. Everyone tried very hard to find the means to pry open the shell she had closed around herself. All effort was met by a vague, unseeing stare without animation and without hope.

Eventually the crew members stopped trying. The nutrient injections became routine, and the zoologist learned to cope with plants. Alicia sat in a corner of the infirmary like a dazzling white statue wrapped in a silver robe. Only her glowing red eyes betrayed warmth and a trace of lingering life.

About three months after Rashim's disappearance and almost a year before it was scheduled to reach port, the *Martian Victory* was pelted by a meteor storm. The shuttles had not been able to work as efficiently as the *Hornet*, and the storm came as something of a surprise. The clear walled observation deck was hit hardest, and there were numerous casualties. Fourteen crew members were killed, and the infirmary was overflowing. The doctor ordered Alicia back to her old sleeping quarters. There she was ignored and forgotten for three days while the medical staff labored over the injured and dying. The remainder of the crew was engrossed in repairing the gaping holes in the side of the vessel.

The meteor storm had upset the food supply worse than it had the crew. The zoologist was at his wit's end trying to deal with braying, terrified, animal protein and quivering vines that would alternately wither and explode with rank-tasting, off-color fruit. As he was trying to placate a bush that was literally throwing melons at him, Alicia appeared and said calmly, "I'll take care of that." He was too relieved to be astounded and rushed back to the paddocks at the other end of the commissary wing.

The doctor's delight at seeing Alicia so fully recovered was somewhat dimmed when she began to talk about seeing Rashim. She explained that he had crossed some type of barrier which thrust him into a totally different universe. He felt lost at first, but once he re-established contact with her, he felt he could begin to explore his new cosmos. She said he was adjusting reasonably well, but he missed the corporeal contact with his old friends and the *Martian Victory*. Somehow he had been able to take the *Hornet* with him, and this at least was a small patch of familiar territory in a totally alien reality.

At times Alicia was heard whispering and laughing in an empty room. Once she even chided Rashim for letting his woolly hair grow until it stood out like a Terran thunder cloud. In spite of these hallucinations, Alicia performed her old botanical functions as well as ever. The captain, with his patched and creaking ship, wasn't too concerned about a little lunacy, especially since the vegetables were palatable again. The doctor, nevertheless, was determined to bring Alicia back to text-book normalcy.

He began by hypnotizing her. This brought forth a lot of images from a childhood filled with snow and ice. Alicia caught cold, but it didn't dispel her illusions about Rashim.

Then the doctor tried to reach her through various types of drugs. He felt that once she accepted the reality of Rashim's disappearance and the inevitability of his death, these visions would cease. Unfortunately, Alicia's subconscious seemed to know even more than her conscious about Rashim's life on the other side of "the barrier". He abandoned drugs.

For about eight months the medical officer and Alicia spent several hours together each day. As the weeks passed, her gossamer hair regained its sheen, and her red eyes once again glowed a soft violet. The wasted muscles under her pale skin regained their fullness and strength. She even began to blush whenever she spoke of her love for Rashim.

The doctor, on the other hand, became more tense and frustrated. He was trying to heal his patient's mind, and only her body was responding. He briefly considered giving her some synthetic vitamins or antibiotics in the hopes that the reverse might also work.

Finally the medic decided that only a severe emotional trauma would jolt Alicia out of her blissful illusion and back to the world of palpable human beings. He secured the tapes of Rashim's last communication just before his disappearance. He also got the tape of that faint cry recorded by the shuttles as the *Hornet* tumbled into the void.

Alicia came to the infirmary just before her sleep time. Her eyes were unnaturally bright and she babbled about Rashim's life in the other world. The doctor warned her that this session would not be pleasant, but that it was necessary to restore her "health."

Alicia listened as the tape began. She heard Rashim's voice describing the blow to his craft and the loss of his original tacking pattern. She heard the familiar, deep, masculine chuckle as he said, "That first hit was a whopper! It really caught me with my gears flappin'. Feed these readings into that big mechanical genius, and see what he spits out." Alicia's eyes misted as she listened. Then the tape ended, and the medic switched on the other tape, the one with the faint, not quite human cry that faded into nothingness.

Alicia listened. When it was over, she rose quietly and gave the doctor a long searching look, her crimson eyes full of loss and pain. Then she moved like a majestic marble statue through the door which slid closed silently behind her.

For the next two days Alicia failed to report to the botanical quarters. Once

again the zoologist was treating the plants like animals, and they were reacting accordingly. The captain complained of his food.

The doctor tried repeatedly to contact Alicia. She would not acknowledge the flashing communicator, and she had put the emergency seal on her door. Finally, in desperation, the doctor got the captain to sign an order authorizing the shipboard security unit to force open the door. The medic was fond of Alicia and feared that his "therapy" might have gone awry with tragic results.

The captain and the doctor stood aside while two security men used alternating power currents to break the emergency seal. After a moment which seemed like an eternity, the door slid open. The doctor rushed in and looked wildly around for his patient. He found her lying in the silken alcove of her sleeping corner. The surrounding drapery was drawn back so that the light from the center of the room fell on her bare shoulders which were supported by a large blue pillow. Leaning against her soft white breast was a pale-amber child with a fluffy cloud of translucent copper-colored hair. His limbs were sturdy as he pulled and tugged greedily at the pink nipple. Before the astonished eyes of the doctor and the captain, he seemed to flow rather than move because he was as insubstantial as golden vapor. When his mother lifted him into the air, he burped and blinked at the two men of flesh, and his mother's topaz smile could be seen glowing proudly, and perhaps a little smugly, through the amber mist of her son's body. ●

Cynthia Wagner-Emmons

Cynthia Wagner-Emmons is an established artist in the batik medium. Her award-winning work featuring mythological and alien beings cavorting in befitting landscapes was exhibited at the 1977 World Science Fiction Convention (SunCon, Miami Beach). Her creations are contained in private collections throughout the United States and Great Britain and have been sold in art galleries and fine craft shops from California to the Atlantic coast.

Ms. Wagner-Emmons recently turned to writing science fiction in an effort to expand the activities of her other worldly characters beyond the confines of two and three dimensional art forms. Her literary

experience includes three years as editor of the *LCC NEWSLETTER* published by Lake Country Craftsmen, Inc., a Rochester based designer-crafts group. She is currently working on her first novel, which is a fantasy about the adventures (and romances) of a heroic dragon.

Graduating from Old Dominion College (now University), Norfolk, Virginia, in 1964, with a BA degree in Art, Ms. Wagner-Emmons later did graduate studies in English literature at the University of Oklahoma. She now resides in upstate New York with her husband, three children, and a basset hound.

CHANGES

In the dark behind my desk, a door
opens, making me a child forever.
The changing season blows through
the door, into myself another time:
a brain buried under layers of concrete,
my hands metal hooks, scratching
those I love when I reach for them.

— Steve Rasnic Tem

MAKING A SMALL, SMALL WORLD

Walter B. Hendrickson, Jr.

THE LATEST thing for rich television addicts is owning your own home ground station. These are 15 foot, dish-shaped antennas, costing between \$15,000 and \$35,000, which receive up to 24 channels beamed down from domestic satellites, called Comsats for short, orbiting 22,300 miles above the equator.

At this altitude, the satellites orbit earth at 1,000 miles an hour, keeping pace with the rotating earth beneath them, in what is called a GEO stationary, or synchronous orbit. This means that once the ground

station is focused on the satellite, it can be fixed permanently in place. No elaborate drive mechanisms or tracking equipment are needed. Although it may not look like it, this reduces the price considerably.

The two dozen channels received from these home ground stations cover not only the three commercial networks and the Public Broadcasting System, but all the programs supplied to cable television systems as well. As Bill Strong of the Associated Press pointed out in a December 13, 1979 newspaper article,

VALLEY FORGE LANDMARK — *This communications satellite earth station, located near the winter quarters of General Washington's Continental Army, was used on December 21, 1973, to begin a new era for domestic communications in the United States. On that date, the station was one of four used by the RCA Satcom system to inaugurate regular, commercial communications satellite service for the nation.*



these include "first-run movies, entertainment specials, an all-sports channel, Spanish language programming, religious shows, children's channels and four 'Super stations' . . . that beam their signals off the satellite in order to widen their audience and attract national advertisers."

These are the programs that cable television stations purchase from the suppliers for a fee, which of course they pass on to their subscribers. Since many owners of home ground stations do not pay these fees, they could be in legal trouble if they are caught. This is not likely to happen, however, as Edward Dooley, a spokesman for the Federal Communications Commission explains: "... the Commission is not involved in overseeing that proper fees are paid for programs received. Rather, this is left to suppliers of the programs. In the event a supplier encounters problems in collecting a proper fee, a civil suit may be filed and it would be up the court to determine what programs were received and how payments could be obtained."

Since under our judicial system the burden of proof is with the accuser, the supplier would virtually have to catch the owner of a ground station in the act of pirating his programs, in front of unimpeachable witnesses. This would be difficult to do without breaking some law, such as trespassing or breaking and entering, in the process. Since the ground stations are still few in number, and usually owned by people beyond the reach of cable television, they are no real threat to the suppliers' income as yet.

The demand for home ground stations is also unlikely to increase enough to up their production and lower their price. For one thing, not everybody has room for a 15-foot antenna. This is especially true since the antenna must be placed where it can "see" the satellite without any interference from buildings, trees, or mountains. Microwave transmissions on earth can also interfere with the antenna's reception.

Electronics engineers, however, are already designing powerful satellites that can send and receive directly from wristwatch-sized, and moderately priced receivers. When these come into use, the suppliers of programs for cable television will have three choices to protect their

incomes and profits. They can continue to use lower powered satellites, sell commercial time, rely on voluntary contributions, or get tax support as do the state supported television networks in other countries.

Since the big selling point for cable-supplied programs is "no commercial interruptions," they will probably choose to stay with the lower-powered satellites. This would be just as well, since it would leave the wrist watch sized ground stations free for personal communications, which is what they are best suited for anyway.

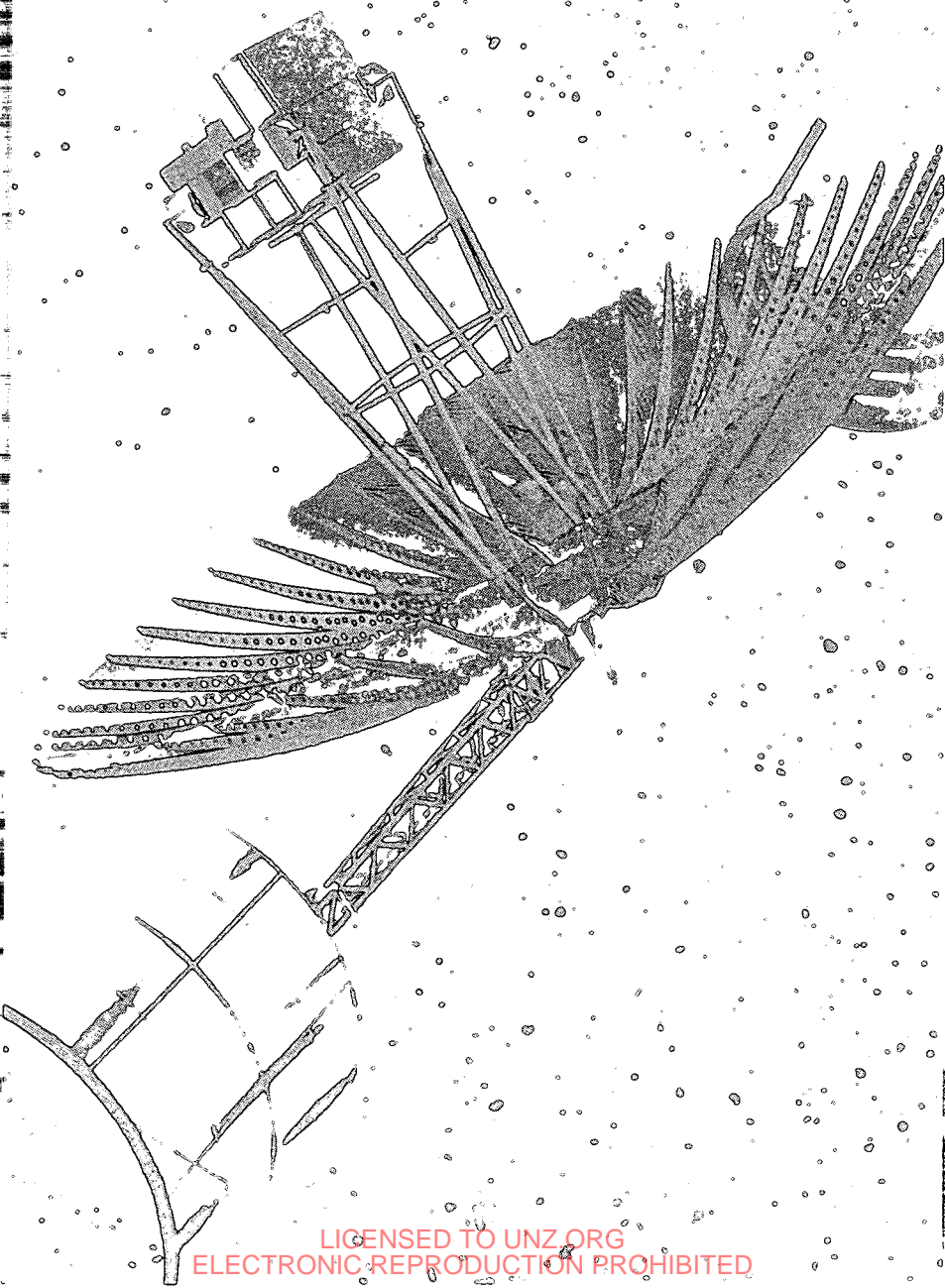
Relaying programs for cable television is a fairly recent task for communications satellites. The first comsats were used to relay radio and television signals across the ocean. The first domestic communications satellites were the Molniya series, the first of which was launched on April 23, 1965. These 1,800 pound cylindrical satellites do not use the synchronous orbits popular with western satellites, because they can not cover extreme northern latitudes, which include much of the Soviet Union.

The Russians tried a synchronous orbit on July 29, 1974, but immediately reverted to the original elliptical orbit.

This orbit which is inclined 65° to the equator, carries the solar powered Molniya satellites from 300 miles above the southern hemisphere out to 25,000 miles above the northern hemisphere. In this orbit, the Soviets maintain a network of three Molniya satellites, each of which is visible to ground stations in the Soviet Union eight to ten hours at a time.

The Soviet Union, however, is not the only country that has areas even more remote than the other side of the ocean. The Canadian government, for example, needed communications satellites because many of the scattered settlements in the remote, frontier-like northern regions of that country were beyond the reach of cables and microwave links. At that time, the late 1960's, these areas were connected to the outside world mainly by radio. Television programs, including news, were received on a delayed basis, if at all.

Telesat Canada was formed to operate the communications satellite network, by the Canadian Parliament on September 1, 1969, and on November 9, 1972, at 8:14



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p.m. *Anik I*, whose name is Eskimo for "brother", was launched into an oval orbit carrying it out to 22,300 miles above earth. After fifteen days of testing, *Anik I* was shifted to a circular orbit 22,300 miles above the equator. Here it matches earth's speed, keeping the satellite fixed above 114° west longitude on the equator. From the synchronous orbit, *Anik* can cover much of the United States as well as Canada. This allowed Telesat Canada to agree to lease two of *Anik's* ten television channels to RCA's Global Communications and Alaska Communications division as soon as they became available. This made *Anik* also the United States' first domestic communications satellite.

Anik 2 was launched from Kennedy Space Center on April 20, 1973, to join its brother in synchronous orbit. With two satellites now in orbit, Telesat Canada was able to lease RCA the two television channels it wanted to use until it was able to launch its own satellite.

On May 29, 1974, *Anik 3* was launched completing Canada's network. These three satellites are identical triplet, sapphire blue cylinders, 6½ feet wide and 5 feet high, topped by a five foot oval, dish-shaped antenna.

It is the protective radiation shielding of their 20,000 solar batteries which gives the *Aniks* their sapphire blue color. These solar cells are the satellite's main source of power. They are supplemented by two 28 volt nickel cadmium batteries which provide power for the *Anik's* 46-day journey through earth's shadow each spring and fall. The relay equipment which uses this power carries twelve microwave channels, including two spares. These channels can carry up to ten television channels, 9,600 simultaneous television programs, or some of both.

The first U.S. Domestic Comsat was not RCA's commercial satellite, but an educational television project developed by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in cooperation with the Federation of Rocky Mountain states. NASA's Applications Technology Satellite-6 (ATS-6) launched on May 29, 1974, was the relay for this project.

From September 9, 1974 to January 17, 1975, and from January 20, 1975 to May 15, 1975, ATS-6 relayed educational television programs to the Appalachians, Rocky Mountains, and Alaska. ATS-6 was

then moved to a spot in synchronous orbit above 35° east longitude over Lake Victoria, Kenya, in East Africa. NASA then lined up the satellite so that All India Radio (AIR) could use it to send educational television programs to remote Indian villages from broadcasting stations in Ahmedabad and Delhi. School programs were broadcast in the mornings and adult education programs in the evenings.

Each of the 2,400 villages used in this test, was equipped with a 10-foot wide \$600 antenna. From there, the programs were broadcast to television sets in 2,600 other villages. For the benefit of city dwellers, the regular AIR-TV channels also carried the educational programs. These were broadcast with two soundtracks to accommodate the numerous languages and dialects of India.

When the Indian experiment was completed in August 1976, ATS-6 headed back to the United States. Along the way, it conducted a variety of educational experiments for countries in Southeast Asia, the Mideast, and South America. These served as practice for some countries planning their own communications satellite.

In the United States, meanwhile, ATS-6's first television relay also served as a test for a permanent educational television satellite relay. This system, called the General Satellite Interconnection Program, was put into operation by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting on March 1, 1978. At that time, only 24 public television stations in the southeastern United States were linked through communications satellites. By the middle of 1979, however, the network had expanded to 270 stations in all fifty states. Radio is being added to this system starting this year, making it fully operational.

This satellite relay system replaces the cables and microwave relay towers which public broadcasting previously leased from AT&T. This network had several shortcomings. For instance, the individual stations could not send programs to others without interrupting the flow of programs from the main national source.

In addition, the system was limited to the forty-eight contiguous states, and even there stations had to wait up to two years to get on the crowded network. Left out of

this system entirely were eight stations in Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, American Virgin Islands, American Samoa and Guam. Switching to a satellite relay system cost the CPB \$39.5 million, but it alleviated the shortcomings of the old system.

Replacing the cables and microwave towers is Western Union's Westar 2 domestic communications satellite which was launched in October 1974. Like its companion, Westar 1, launched in April 1974, Westar 2 is an identical quintuplet of the Canadian Anik.

Westar 2 is stationed in synchronous orbit above 90° west longitude on the equator just off the coast of South America. From there, it covers all of the United States and its possessions, except American Samoa.

The CPB lease for television channels on Westar allowed its main station at Springfield, Virginia, and its four regional stations, to send or "uplink" as an engineer would say, four programs at once to the satellite. Westar then relays (downlinks) the programs either to all the stations in the system or to those in a special area.

These special broadcasts could involve areas "such as programs on big city problems for big city stations; Spanish language programs for stations whose communities have large Spanish speaking populations; or programs on rural problems for primarily rural broadcasting television stations," according to the CPB.

Work toward the satellite relay system began soon after the CPB was formed on November 7, 1967. The tests with ATS-6 and others using the Aniks, led to the CPB's leasing four channels on Westar 2 on August 13, 1976. Contracts were let for the first receiver stations in December 1976, and the main broadcasting station in April 1977. The first receiver-only station, KERA-TV in Dallas, Texas, was finished in 1977, and by July 5, 1978; the satellite interconnection system was well underway. Ground breakings were conducted for sixteen public television stations on that date.

With all these domestic communications satellites and Westars, two Satcoms were launched by RCA on December 12, 1975, and March 31, 1976. In addition, AT&T and General Telephone are putting up satellites to relay telephone messages across the U.S. There are also interna-

tional communications satellites and weather watching satellites in synchronous orbit.

There is no danger of these satellites actually colliding. Their broadcasts, however, do get mixed together — like those on earth-based broadcasting stations that are too close on the dial. For this reason, the corporations in the domestic comsats business are lobbying the Federal Communications Commission for the prize location — over the Galapagos Islands. This prize is worth \$130 million a year in usefulness because from it a satellite can broadcast to all fifty states.

Whichever company gets the prize location, today's domestic comsats are just beginning. As Phillip A. Rubin, the CPB's Director of Engineering Research, told the House Subcommittee on Communications on August 4, 1977: "... In order of ascending complexity and cost, the potential uses of satellites in broadcasting include:

"1. Providing network service to television stations — the function described above.

"2. Providing signals to 'mini-stations' located in remote areas of the country.

"3. Providing signals to individual receivers, a function known as 'direct-satellite-to-home broadcasting.'"

Even satellite broadcasting direct to your home TV set is not the ultimate development the electronic industry has in mind. Next will come the communications satellite powerful enough to relay messages between wrist radios like those Dick Tracy started using decades ago. Just as Dick Tracy has switched to two-way wrist TVs, so these will not be far behind in the real world either. ●

Walter Hendrickson, Jr., is a freelance writer with the following credits: Handbook for Space Travelers, 1959; Pioneering in Space, 1961; Reach for the Moon, 1961; The Study of Rockets, Missiles and Space Made Simple, 1963; What's Going on in Space?, 1968; Apollo 11: Men to the Moon, 1970; Who Really Invented the Rocket?, 1974; Manned Spacecraft to Mars and Venus, 1975; Illinois: It's People and Culture, 1975; Class G-Zero, 1976; plus he has contributed many articles to popular magazines and technical publications.

AMAZING INTERVIEW

An Interview With Manly Wade Wellman

Darrell Schweitzer

MANLY WADE WELLMAN sold his first story to *WEIRD TALES* in 1927. Since then he has written a wide variety of books in various fields. He was a mainstay of the science fiction pulps of the 1930's and 40's. Among his science fiction novels are *TWICE IN TIME* (first published in *STARTLING STORIES* in 1940) and *NUISANCE VALUE* (ASTOUNDING, 1938-39). Recent novels of interest are *SHERLOCK HOLMES' WAR OF THE WORLDS* (a collaboration with his son, Wade Wellman) and *THE BEYONDERS*. He is probably best known for his unique supernatural stories in Southern Appalachian settings. Wellman is one of the few fantasists to make use of the folklore of the region. His most famous book in this vein is the collection of the "John the Baladeer" stories, *WHO FEARS THE DEVIL?* (Arkham House, 1963, currently in print from Dell). A novel featuring the character, *THE OLD GODS WAKEN*, was published in 1979 by Doubleday. His collection, *WORSE THINGS WAITING* (1973) won the World Fantasy Award.

AMAZING: Did you ever want to be anything else before you became a writer, or were you set on it from the start?

Wellman: Well there were times when I was little that I wanted to be a cowboy, a deep sea diver, and things like that, but I think I always wanted to write ever since I could string a few letters together into words. I think I was trying to write stories when I was six years old.

AMAZING: How long before you were serious about selling them?

Wellman: It's hard to answer that, because I wrote all through school, between the things anyone did, like studying, or in

my case playing a lot of football. I wanted to write, and I had observed the fact that there were magazines and people were being published in them and paid for it. When I was in college — that was a long time ago, during the Calvin Coolidge administration — I sold my first stories.

AMAZING: What attracted you to writing supernatural fiction?

Wellman: I think I gotta go way back to my beginnings. I was born in Angola. My parents were medical missionaries. The people — who by the way were wonderful people — were full of wonderful stories of men who changed into leopards, a skull up in a tree predicting the future, and so on. I would listen to these things and it took hold of me, and I never lost it. When I came back to this country when I was a little boy, I lived out in rural places and I always had an ear for such material, and I've stayed with it ever since. I hope I still have an ear for it. I love to hear something new in the way of folklore, legendry, and so forth.

AMAZING: Did you begin immediately with American folklore? This is what you're best known for now.

Wellman: Yes, I did. After all, despite the fact I was born over there, I am an American. My heritage is Southern American. I was writing about what I ran into and what I heard. Yes, if I have a reputation at all, it is as a Southern regional writer. I have written a few stories about Africa, but even though the memories are vivid, I was a little boy and it was long, long ago. God knows things are different in Angola now.

AMAZING: Is the tradition you are drawing on still alive and growing, or are people just preserving the stories?

Wellman: I think we're getting farther and farther away from it all the time. We don't realize the fact that we're getting away from folklore. The places are getting settled up. The old days in which there was a fixed habitat are going away. You know what I mean — you'd be born there and live, and die there. You'd grow up and in the little town or little country community you'd meet a girl and marry her and have children, and when you died you'd leave the farm to your son. The people to whom I listen — I go up into the North Carolina mountains — are older people. The young ones are sophisticated. I think there had better be a stronger and more intelligent effort than there is now to preserve our folklore because it's going away. Every-

body is going to be like everyone else sooner or later; watching the same TV programs, wearing the same clothes, even speaking with the same accents I suppose. I hate to see regionalism go, but why deny that it is going?

AMAZING: Do you think the new society will develop its own folklore?

Wellman: We're developing it all along. Look at the jokes you hear about computers. We have of course lived up to and made legends reality. For instance, flying to the moon. I can remember when I wrote stories about a flight to the moon and these were considered extravagant. It is now commonplace. A flight to Mars will be commonplace. But as to the supernatural, it has already become quaint. I have known people in my youth who have believed in witches and werewolves. Now I don't know many who do actually believe these things, although they're interested. They're curious about them. It becomes another way of life, and I suppose more folklore will develop. I think folklore exists in big cities, and some very interesting folklore, although I'm not a city man and don't write that.

AMAZING: How do you think belief in the supernatural effects the writing of it? There's one school of thought which says believers can't write it because they take it for granted, and they cite Aleister Crowley's novels as an example. Then there are those who say you must at least half believe or you won't take it seriously at all.

Wellman: About that Montague Summers said you have to believe in ghosts to write about them. He added in a preface to one of his books that he had seen a ghost. I go along with M.R. James, a writer I very much admire, who said he would be willing to consider the evidence if it was presented to him. By which I gather that he had no particular belief. Nor do I know what to believe, but I'll go along with M.R. James. If someone wants to show me that there is such a thing as a vampire or a werewolf or a ghost — I've never seen a ghost, although once or twice I thought I was pretty close; I've done my best to see them and gone to haunted houses and so forth — I'll consider it. I'm a skeptic, but I'm not closed-minded about it, nor do I think anyone should be.

AMAZING: You had a novel in *STARTLING* in 1944 called "Strangers in the Heights" and there was something in the

author's column about strange things happening while the story was being written. What about that?

Wellman: It happened in South America, as you'll remember, and there is always something interesting and grotesque coming up from South America. There were little pieces in the paper at that time about what seemed to be werewolves in the mountains of South America. You know how you can take a little germ of something like that and light a shuck and take off with it. When it comes to that, may I say that most of my stories have at least some kind of a basis in what somebody thinks is fact.

AMAZING: How much did Farnsworth Wright (the editor of *WEIRD TALES* during its "golden age," 1924-40) influence what you wrote and how you wrote it?

Wellman: Farnsworth Wright was a great joy. He was the best editor I ever had, and I think I can say that because I had a great many editors and very fine ones. Wright bought from me when I was in college. He was a man who would make up his mind if you were worth fooling with. Now I was pretty raw, but he worked with me. He made me revise and he would go into little minor nuances of a story and perhaps ask you to bring something up. He was very critical, but he was constructively critical. On top of that he was a tremendously erudite man and he would know what he was talking about in this field, and as close as you can be friends with an editor, he and I were friends. I considered him a fine gentleman and I remember how deeply I mourned him when he died.

AMAZING: What do you most remember about him?

Wellman: Wright was a tall, gaunt man and he had, I believe Parkinson's Disease. Anyway he shook all the time. He was never still. His whole body trembled. The point is you would soon forget this because he was a man of great charm. He was quiet; he was strange; but he was *sui generis*. There has never been anyone like that. In fantasy publishing today, editors pay little attention to the kind of man Wright was and the things he did.

AMAZING: Editors today still do ask for revisions and try to develop people. How did Wright differ in this?

Wellman: Well, if he wanted a story from you, he would stay with you to the bitter

end. My wife Frances wrote a story for him, and he sent it back repeatedly. There was one character, an old priest, and he wanted her to bring him out and make him vivid. He got three revisions from her, which means four drafts, and then bought it and sent her a check and sent the story back and said, "Revise it again." Frances sat down and did. The story, which is going to be published in England this coming year, called "Don't Open That Door," in fact underwent another revision for the British editor. Let's use the word painstaking. I won't say that he was soft on anybody. Now there were people from whom he didn't ask much revision. Augie Derleth used to say he would send it and Wright would buy it. I think he bought pretty much whatever Lovecraft sent him and he should have. Without Lovecraft it wouldn't have been *WEIRD TALES*. Frank Belknap Long worked with him. Most of the people I know paid attention to what Wright said and he didn't scruple to say it, and if he worked with you he sure to God didn't baby you. And if a story wasn't for him, he wouldn't fool with it, but he might say as he said to me one time, "Get back and write me something else." What I'm saying is that a lot of editors are like this, but a lot of them are not. If they look at it and don't want it, they'll pop it right back to you and start looking at something someone else has written. I think the point about Wright was that he was doing a very special kind of magazine and he was shooting the works. He was dedicated. And there never was a magazine like *WEIRD TALES*, and I'll say again, Wright was the best, the most rewarding editor I ever had.

AMAZING: How did you get along with John Campbell?

Wellman: Campbell, of course, was a very good editor. I didn't terribly. What John liked to do was pitch you a curve. He'd give you an idea for a story and have you go and write that. He wasn't so enthusiastic for what you thought of yourself. I think he had a very good mind for these, although if that's what's going to happen, you're going to have a lot of idea stories. I never had any squabbles with John. Some of the things he believed in I didn't and don't to this day. Politically and socially there were different things, but he was a very splendid and very successful editor. On top of all that he was an oddball.

AMAZING: What made you turn to

science fiction?

Wellman: I was writing that mostly because I wanted to. It appealed to me and I was reading H.G. Wells, Jules Verne, people like that, when I was a boy. I don't know. Looking at you, why are you interested in this sort of thing? One just gets that way. I remember a lot of people thinking this was odd in me and asking, "Why are you writing about these things which could never possibly happen?" The only point is they've all possibly happened. We have flown across space. We have split the atom. We have done wonderful things and terrible things, we human beings, and these things which are commonplace today were all imaginatively predicted long ago. Well, I wrote it because I wanted to write it.

AMAZING: What is the primary appeal of the supernatural story for you?

Wellman: The sense of wonder, and of course the sense of terror. There aren't very many supernatural stories that aren't frightening. On the other hand, some of them are kindly little stories, but look here. You watch a Walt Disney picture. I mean back yonder when Walt was still at it doing something like *Snow White*. The most impressive things were the frightening things. You read *Alice in Wonderland*. You think what a delightful little dream story it is, but do you notice all the terrible things that are just hanging at the edge of perception, like the moamraths. You'll hear one of them cry out if you go down in the woods, and if you hear it once you'll be quite content. Or the crow that shut out the sky flying over Tweedledum and Tweedledee and how they ran. There is terror in these things. There is terror in the little stories we tell our children. Jack climbing the beanstalk—had the giant found him he'd have eaten him. I wonder what that goes back to. What in the beginning of this race? A fear of cannibals? These things are all there, and, by the way, kids love it. They love scary things and eat 'em up.

AMAZING: Did you have any conscious literary influences when you started writing, or did you just write the sort of stories you heard orally?

Wellman: Of course I've written a lot of other things besides fantasy and science fiction, but I think early on the things that influenced me were Rudyard Kipling, Jack London, Arthur Conan Doyle, these representative things that you would read—

and as I said, H.G. Wells. I ran into him pretty early. As I got along and became mature, well, I go along with what William Faulkner said, that you'd better read James Joyce's *Ulysses* the way a Baptist preacher reads the Bible. The books I read, or rather re-read, are by Hemingway, Thomas Wolfe, William Faulkner and some of the English writers. I'll say that the novel that made the biggest impression on me—I was about eighteen when I read it—was *The Long Journey* by Johannes V. Jensen, which by the way is full of the supernatural and is in itself a sort of story of mankind.

AMAZING: A movie was made of *Who Fears The Devil?* I have not seen it, but I haven't heard much good about it. What did you think of it?

Wellman: Congratulations on not seeing it. I didn't have any quarrel with the movie people. They were nice fellows, but looking at it I think it's one of the ten worst movies I ever saw. I think they missed the point a lot. I remember that at about the same time that I saw it (The movie was called *The Legend of Hillbilly John*.)—they came and had a preview in my home town of Chapel Hill—I saw a movie called *Fiddler On The Roof*. Now I'm not Jewish, but I can appreciate these things, and I saw that here was a wonderful capture of the folkways of a little Jewish settlement in pre-World War I Russia. And I thought to myself, why can't we do the same thing for an American folk theme instead of messing it all up with a bunch of trained seals in Hollywood? No, it wasn't a good picture, and I don't know anybody who thinks it really was. They wrote in a lot of things themselves that just aren't true about the mountain people.

AMAZING: Did it suffer from Hollywood stereotyping and caricaturing? That's precisely what I would expect would have happened to it.

Wellman: That's precisely what it suffered from.

AMAZING: The Beverly Hillbillies Syndrome?

Wellman: As a matter of fact I think that was where they got their idea of what mountain people are like. Okay, I greatly respect the mountain people. I love them. They're a virile, proud, self-respecting people. They can be pretty rough. If you want to get hurt, you can go about it in the right way up in the mountains and get

yourself killed, but they are a tremendously individual bunch of people. Their way of life is being modified and passed away. I can't think off-hand of a good movie I ever saw about the Southern mountain people.

AMAZING: Are these characteristics you describe the reason why so much folklore has been preserved among them when the rest of the country has lost it?

Wellman: It's been preserved because people haven't gotten back in. The little corner of the Southern mountains where I go whenever I get a chance is not developed. For instance, there aren't any factories there. There's no tourism. When I went up there before some of my friends helped me build a cabin there, I had no place to stay unless I was going to stay at the house of a friend, and I did and am very grateful for that. It was provincial and very insular, but it has flavor. I don't know whether it's all going to be swallowed up in the next few years or not. I only wish it wouldn't, but what good does it do you to wish?

AMAZING: Presumably then you'll continue to write stories of their folklore as long as you can.

Wellman: At this meeting I heard that the third of a series of novels about John is going to be published by Doubleday, as soon as I get it written, and editors when they come up to me talk about this particular thing, this regional country stuff. Although I have seen some editors flatly say they didn't want any hillbilly stories. The word hillbilly, by the way, up in the mountains, until very recently at least, was an insult. If you went up where I go and called a man a hillbilly, you got out of there the best way you could, because he thought it was his born duty to take the neck out of your body. However, we know what hillbilly means. So I won't write for that editor.

AMAZING: The term has always sounded condescending to me.

Wellman: Yeah, it's like sticking racist names on different ethnic groups. I've always refused to be called a hillbilly, and I've always refused to be called a cracker. Don't anybody try it, not even in my old age.

AMAZING: What's a cracker?

Wellman: Well, that's a term for Southerners. I used to hear it in the army, and somebody called me a cracker in the army, and after that he never called me one

again.

AMAZING: What do you think about the current health of the fantasy field?

Wellman: You know how we sit around here and talk about how we don't have so many magazines, but a great many magazines in the mainstream will buy fantasy, and there seem to be some people around here making a living out of it. Now it was very hard indeed back, let's say, in the 1930's. As a matter of fact if you were a freelance writer then, you were apt to make everything grist for your mill and write other things than fantasy and science fiction. And I've done that. I've written historical novels, some very highly realistic regional novels, and a lot of Southern history, and some books for boys. The whole point is that a writer has to live, whether you see the necessity or not, and he has to think about money. When you hear writers at this meeting talking to their agents, talking to their editors, the talk is always about money. After all, it's a capitalist world and we need it. But I think that fantasy does have a strong hold. The right kind of editor on a new magazine, I think, would do very well. If you had a Farnsworth Wright or a John Campbell. What you need is editorship and you need it in a very high degree.

AMAZING: Do you feel that too many writers in the modern field are repeating the past?

Wellman: I know what you mean. You mean people are writing about the Cthulhu Mythos and writing pastiches of Robert E. Howard. I don't awfully like to see that done. It seems to me that new themes are badly needed. But what are the new themes? Somebody you always used to hear quoted claimed there were only 38 basic plots and the Greeks used them all. I'd like to see a list of the 38 basic plots, but I don't think that there's going to be any defense by readers or editors either against first class writing. There never was and I don't think there ever will be, and there is some very fine writing indeed being done in this genre today.

AMAZING: What are your immediate plans?

Wellman: My immediate plans are to finish the third John the Balladeer novel. Indeed I must. After that, there are other projects, not all in fantasy. I don't know. I've got years of work ahead of me; and somehow I've got to get it done. I don't think there's any point in not having some

kind of future. Do you?

AMAZING: Thank you Mr. Wellman.

Recorded at the 5th World Fantasy Convention, Oct 1979. ●

FANS PROSE & CONS

Send news to: NW 440 Windus St., Pullman, WA 99163

by Steve Fahnstalk

GOING, GOING . . . GONE!

IN MY LAST column but one, I talked a little bit about what a fan does; I'd like to continue in that vein for a couple of columns more. One of the things I'd like to talk about is, regardless of what kind of sf interests one has, a mainstay of most fans who are also readers: collecting.

I will ignore, for the moment, those fans who are mainly interested in fandom for fandom's sake; e.g., those who go to conventions and meetings only to meet other people of like interests, or to party, or whatever. They are only peripheral to this topic. Most steady sf readers (which includes reading fans) have the collecting mania to one degree or another.

I don't know what is the root cause of collecting, but I suspect that it has some kind of psychological connection with the desire to be connected in some concrete way with the genre we all know and love — that is, for many of us, it starts as a substitute/surrogate for any more palpable connection with sf. I think that books are a tangible substitute for those friends we have or have had trouble in finding. Or we want proof that our manias are rooted in reality; we can point to the

books and say "Look there, I'm not alone, I'm not crazy. This is real, even if you don't understand it, Mom (or whoever)."

I have a fair idea of how I got started collecting. Most of the sf I read came from the libraries, but occasionally my parents would buy me a paperback (back when they were only 25¢ each), and I kept them for the evenings when I had nothing else science-fictional to read — I read and re-read them with great pleasure. Then in 1959 or 1960, I became friends with another young man who was a year or so older than I, and he had great stacks of sf books! He had all the Ace Double series which had been published up to that time (remember the Emsh and Valigursky covers?) and all the Scribner Heinlein books in hardcover, and so forth ... and I decided that come hell or high water, I was going to do it too! And the mania grew and grew. How did you start?

Thanks to those Heinlein juveniles, I got hooked on hardcovers; at this time, my office (actually our third bedroom) is piled to overflowing with shelves, stacks, and boxes of books, magazines, and related items. And I even have the cream of my collection in the living room bookshelves. Is your situation similar? From the situations of almost all the fans I know, I suspect it is.

What if you can't afford the unbelievably high prices of hardcover and softcover books and (sorry Elinor) magazines? What are you supposed to do, collect only one book a month and agonize over all the ones you can't afford to take off the stands? Well, there is a way you can get a lot more for your money.

The best way to get magazines fairly cheaply is to subscribe. Don't try to get every magazine on the stands, it's too expensive for the average fan. Decide which ones are your favorites, save your pennies for a couple of months, and buy a two or three-year subscription (plug: with *Amazing* you save \$2 on a two-year sub) ... it may be a lot of bucks all at once, but it's cheaper in the long run, and you will have that magazine regularly. You never have to skip an issue if you're short that particular payday. Also, a few magazines (and not as a regular thing) are available through the magazine clearing houses for even more savings. Or, as a last resort, you can hunt the local used book store, hoping that someone has sold them the

latest issue. But the first way is more of a sure thing.

How about books? A hardcover will run you \$7.95 to \$12.95 and up, depending on book and publisher. If you just want reading copies, join the Doubleday SF Book Club. They're cheap (relatively, for hardcovers), and in the case of Doubleday books, virtually identical to the first editions (less quality than most publishers, which is a shame). Or, you can check out your local Waldenbooks (or equivalent) for remainders. They're usually the same price, or sometimes cheaper, as book club books. And they're firsts, usually. But as in the case of magazines at your used-book store, it's very much catch-as-catch-can.

Or, and this applies to both hardcovers and paperbacks as well as to magazines, you can go to the huckster's rooms at a con. Now, I'm not talking about the high-priced collectible items, which exist in profusion there; though heaven knows that's almost the only way to fill out and complete your collection. I'm talking about everyday run-of-the-mill sf books or magazines. Most hucksters will have a selection of good, used copies of books (recent), magazines (ditto), and the like. They may not be immaculate when you get them, as they would be if you bought them off the stands, but they're readable and cheap. And they usually have remainder copies of first (newer) hardbacks at the same remainder prices as Dalton or Waldenbooks, if there's not one of those in your area. That's not bad; and all the above is just another of the many side benefits of attending conventions ... how about that?

For those of you who are experienced in the ways of collecting, and for those long-time fans to whom this is all old hat, I'd like to apologize for talking about things you already know about recently. For at least a few more columns, I'm going to have to explain a lot of the things that you take for granted, but which are a mystery to new fans and readers of *Amazing*. Bear with me, please. It's our duty to try to reach those neos (not meant as derogation, just a statement of fact) who don't yet know what it's all about.

Next time, unless circumstances prevent it, I'd like to talk about collecting art, and con art shows. Because I fancy myself as a bit of an authority on sf art, I

have an idea that there are quite a number of would-be art collectors out there who don't know what they're missing, and I'd like to fill them in a little.

Keep those cards and letters pouring in (3 or 4 this month alone, heh heh) and remember to enclose an SASE for a reply. Remember "Doc" Smith, QX? Clear ether!

ZINES AND SMALL PRESS ITEMS:

Well, fellow collectors, the reason I wanted to talk about collecting this month is the following book:

THE PAPERBACK PRICE GUIDE (TM), Kevin Hancer; Overstreet Publications, 780 Hunt Cliff Dr. NW, Cleveland, TN 37311. \$9.95. Overstreet gave a boost to the comic market with his Comic Book Guide; now it's the paperbacks' turn. Like it or not, someone was bound to do it... and the dealers will no longer be using the rule of thumb for pricing. Kevin Hancer, the editor, has collected thousands of prices paid for almost all the paperbacks published up to 1959, and collated them into this handy-dandy book, which has a stunning skiffy cover. If you want to know how much your collection is worth, or how much you'll have to pay from now on, or if you just want a terrific reference guide to paperback books, with lots of cover photos (several pages in color), you *must* get this book. It had to happen sometime, so let's make use of it.

ANTITHESIS: Pat Spath, 687 E. Market St., Marietta, PA 17547; quarterly, \$5.50/copy (\$6.50 for the anniversary issue in January). When this great big package arrived, and out tumbled the four most recent issues, each one 110-180 pages, I was impressed in spite of myself. A Trek 'zine with glossy 2-color covers, yet I was even more impressed when I started reading... fan fiction, all based on Star Trek's Klingons, and some of it is *damned* good! Some of the art is excellent, too — and I thought Trekkers only wrote drek! I don't understand it, mumble mumble... am I slipping, or something?

VISIONS, The Art of Ken Raney; \$3 from Ken Raney, 314 W. Douglas, Ellsworth, KS 67439. This is a fanartist's portfolio. Some of it is good, some

excellent, some just competent. But "just competent" is a compliment. It's on various themes, mostly fantasy, but using various styles and techniques, and it's professionally printed in brown ink on eggshell paper. I liked it very much, and predict great things for Ken in the future. I predict you'll like it too, it's obviously a labor of love.

RERUNS, The Magazine of Television History; P.O. Box 832, Santa Monica, CA 90406; bi-monthly, \$2 copy/\$10 per year. The editor/publisher, Richard Tharp, assures me that this isn't a fanzine, but he's wrong. He just doesn't know it... it looks like a good offset zine, and it's full of fannish-interest TV info. Like in the first two issues, there are articles on "The Addams Family" (complete episode guide) and "The Prisoner", just for a couple. This is well within the interest of many fans. After all, "a fanzine is what I point to..." If you like TV, you'll want this fmz.

ARECIBO; From the Gang of Three (copycats!); 9800 Gentry Ave., St. Louis, MO 63125; Quarterly, \$1.25 each (US), \$1.75 ("elsewhere"). Number 9 is the special Harvia/Thayer ish; contains a Thayer interview, cartoons; book/film reviews; the usual. I enjoyed the fmz reviews, too. My main beef is that "Stamp Out the Muppets" ad inside the front cover... I see the humor but Kermit looks so pathetic hanging there. Sob.

FANCYCLOPEDIA II; \$9.95 from Mirage Press, P.O. Box 28, Manchester, MD 21102. The reference work for those who want to try to understand fandom's slang, history, etc. It's thick and juicy, and a must for neos and anyone who's even slightly interested in fandom. Get some now!

Running short on space, so on to:

CONVENTION LISTINGS:

CHATTACON 6; Jan 16.-18; \$7 to 12/1, \$10 after, \$11 banquet to: Box 21173, Chattanooga, TN 37421. **GOH**: Jack "Well World" Chalker. Also has Dickson, Longyear, Tucker. **TM**: Forry "First Fan" Ackerman. Again, no programming available. Check out the art show.

CONFUSION; Jan 23-25; \$11 to 1/15, \$15 at door to PO Box 1821, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. **GOH**: Barry "Enemy Mine" Longyear (no, silly, that's the name of his Hugo-winning novella); **FGOH**: Dave Innes, **TM**: Gay Haldeman. Masquerade, usual, plus "Snow Creature" contest. Wards off blizzards, I'm told, plus prizes awarded for best sculpture in the white stuff.

LASTCON; Jan. 23-25 (I couldn't resist listing it last); \$12 to 1/16, \$15 at door to: 50 Dove St., Albany, NY 12210. **GOH**: Hal Clement, **FGOH**: Jan Howard Finder. Usual, plus "name-the-alien."

UNNAMED CON (Jan 23-25 '81) Long Beach CA. **PGoHst**: C.S. Lewis. **FGoH**: will be auctioned. Memb: \$10 to 11/7, then \$12; \$15 at door. Film program through hotel video system. Info & checks to Long Beach SF Association, 729 E. Willow, Long Beach CA 90806.

SHERLOCKON (Jan 23-25 '81) Travelodge Internat'l Hotel, Los Angeles CA. Memb: \$10 to 9/30, \$15 to 12/31, then \$20. Banquet: \$12.50 to 9/30, then \$15; \$20 at door. Rare films, book sales, London

music hall show, etc. Dealer tables: \$40 incl. 1 memb. Info: Sherlockon, Box 1330, Hawthorne CA 90250; send sase. Checks payable to Blustering Gales.


AQUACON (Feb 12-15 '81) Disneyland Hotel, Anaheim CA. **PGoh**: Philip Jose Farmer. **FGoHs**: Janice Bogstad, Jeanne Gomoll. **TM**: William Rotsler. Memb: \$15 to 12/31. Huckster tables: \$45 first, \$25 add'l to 1-16, incl. 1 memb. 15% off to used book dealers. Info: AquaCon, Box 815, Brea CA 92621.

CINECON '81 (Easter '81) Melbourne, Australia. **GoH**: Robert Bloch. Memb: \$10 Australian now; likely \$25 or more at door. Info: Merv Binns, Space Age Books, 305-307 Swanston St., Melbourne 3000 Vic., Australia.

Keep those cons and letters coming in folks. See you next time.



NEVER FIRED a SHOT — Robert Brown

 KAY," MAJOR Craig said to his intercom, "give me a minute, then send the nut in." Craig sighed and reached for his aspirin. When they'd assigned him as 'public liason officer,' they had told him he would need tons of aspirin. And antiacid. What they hadn't told him was that he would need a psychiatrist after his six-month punishment stretch in the position.

It seemed to Craig that every nut in America made a point of bringing their lunatic theories and assorted delusions to the Pentagon, and he had to deal with them. Sometimes he wished they would stop bothering him and would try the CIA.

"Major . . . ?" a small voice said from a smaller opening in his door. Craig motioned him in, and the small man entered. He looked so much like a stereotypical absent-minded professor that Craig had to suppress a laugh. He looked terribly out of place in the major's office, which had been designed to awe the visitor with pictures of impressive looking strategic weapons everywhere, and more flags than the fourth of July.

"Sit down, Doctor Walton. What can I do for you?"

"It's, um, *Walden*, not Walton, sir," Walden said apologetically. He picked a chair and sat, perfectly prim and straight.

"Yes, sorry," Craig said. "How can I help you?"

"Well, you see, I . . . I have invented the perfect weapon."

Craig held still, holding his phony smile and thinking, *Christ! Another live one.*

"The perfect weapon?" Craig said as nonchalantly as he could. He lit up a cigarette and noted with pleasure Walden's distasteful look.

"Yes. The plans are all here." Walden patted his battered briefcase.

"I see. What makes it perfect?"

"Well, it doesn't destroy property, it . . . it makes the enemy totally helpless, and, best of all, no one gets injured in the process." Walden beamed.

"No one gets hurt? What the hell kind of a weapon is that?"

"Well, I was working at the University on neurophysiology; with specialization in the pain and pleasure centers in the hypothalamus of the brain. I was experimenting with electromagnetic phenomena and the subsequent reactions of nerve function when the brain is subjected to such fields, and . . ."

"Yes, yes. But what does it do?"

"Well, I found that I could stimulate the hypothalamus without actual physical contact, so . . ."

"Oh," Craig said, brightening. "I get it. You mean you can stimulate the enemy's brain and put him in intense pain without even laying a finger on him. That's . . ."

"Oh, no, no, no, no, no!" Walden shrank back into his chair in horror. He resettled his glasses, then said, "I wouldn't . . . couldn't think of it!" He caught himself, ashamed of his anger. "Well, excuse me, but I think you have that reversed."

"Then what does it do?" Craig asked. "I kind of liked that idea."

"Well, you see, I have a son, who was wounded in the Viet Nam conflict and I was working on this for the medical applications that he'd got me thinking on. But then, complications came, and we didn't get enough money from the Veterans Administration, so I thought maybe the Army would be interested in

this application of the device.

"You see, I have worked out a plan whereby you could incapacitate the enemy by overstimulation of the pleasure centers. The human brain can only take so much, you know, too much and you pass out. That is how it works. It is clean, efficient, effective, long lasting, and perfectly safe. It is perfect."

Craig looked at Walden for a minute in silence, and then began to laugh uncontrollably. When he finally came up for air, red faced, he managed to gasp between guffaws, "You can't be serious!"

"I most certainly can! Imagine it, you could take over an entire city — an entire country — without the loss of one life. Oh, yes, there would be problems of course, people operating machinery, and heart attacks, but you could still have a near bloodless war."

"What kind of a war would that be? I mean, hell, what kind of a deterrent would it make? You can't threaten an enemy with 'Stop! Or I'll give you intense pleasure!' It would never work."

"Why not?"

"Well, it has never been done before, it, well, it . . . it . . . it just *wouldn't*, that's all. If we tried it we'd be the laughing stock of NATO. You can't fight a war that way."

"You sir," Walden said simply, "are a fool. Good day." With an audible, contemptuous sniff, Walden picked up his briefcase and stalked out. He almost slammed the door, but thought the better of it and caught it just in time, closing it quietly, as usual.

Craig stared at the door, still snickering. Finally, he picked up the phone to call a friend. "Hey, Charlie," he said, "you'll never believe this one."

"HELLO, HONEY?" Walden said into the phone. "No, no, they wouldn't buy it."

"Yes, I tried but . . ."

"I know."

"You get a job? Don't be silly, what would you do with a job?"

"Don't worry, I'll get the money somehow."

Walden fingered the battered card that man had given him a few days before. The offer had seemed repugnant, not to mention traitorous, then, but he did need the money.

He looked at the number on the card and dialed.

HARRY BELSO *knew* that the Army desperately needed his seltzer water spritzing invention to repel the dreaded UFO invasion that only he knew was threatening the country. He was surprised when the local National Guard post referred him to the Army, the Army sent him to the Navy, the Navy to the Marines, Marines to Air Force, Air Force to Coast Guard, and the Coast Guard sent him back to the Army. He finally decided to call the Pentagon and get them all at once.

Harry was also surprised when the major he had reached — Craig, they'd said his name was — suddenly cut off in mid-sentence. Harry could still hear him on the line, breathing low and heavy, but he wouldn't answer no matter what Harry said, and Harry was getting mad.

Major Craig wasn't getting mad. Far from it. He sat euphoric, humming a little tune, and watching the pretty green suited men float down on their pretty white parachutes, drifting in the morning breeze like tiny, wind-blown flowers.



Joe
A quest for control against a terrifying Alie
again
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